PLATO'S *GORGIAS*

Speech, Soul and Politics

Edited by

David Machek and Vladimír Mikeš

BRILL

Plato's *Gorgias*: Speech, Soul and Politics

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VOLUME 17

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This Open Access publication was made available via the generous support of the University of Bern, Switzerland, and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF).

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Machek, David, editor. | Mikeš, Vladimír, 1976- editor.
Title: Plato's Gorgias : speech, soul and politics / edited by David Machek, Vladimír Mikeš.
Other titles: Plato's Gorgias (Brill Academic Publishers)
Description: Leiden : Brill, [2024] | Series: Brill's Plato studies series, 2452–2945 ; volume 17 | Includes bibliographical references. | Text in English, French, and German.
Identifiers: LCCN 2024013976 (print) | LCCN 2024013977 (ebook) | ISBN 9789004699052 (hardback) | ISBN 9789004701878 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Plato. Gorgias.
Classification: LCC B371 .P535 2024 (print) | LCC B371 (ebook) | DDC 170–dc23/eng/20240513
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024013976
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024013977

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 2452-2945
ISBN 978-90-04-69905-2 (hardback)
ISBN 978-90-04-70187-8 (e-book)
DOI 10.1163/9789004701878

This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

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Preface

In the last two decades two questions have gradually emerged as most pressing for interpreters of the *Gorgias*, both related to the flow of argumentation in the dialogue: its unity on the one hand and its persuasiveness on the other. To some extent these qualities might be questioned in any Platonic work that does not consist in one simple query or concerns a subject that necessitates the pursuit of more than one single question. But the *Gorgias* is obviously a peculiar case in this category: it offers a large canvas where Socrates is standing up to opponents representing not merely theoretical views on particular subjects but stances opposed to his way of life in its crucial dimensions – his way of speaking to others and his understanding of his proper final goals. Concerning unity, there can be no doubt that investigations into the sense and aim of speechmaking, into the meaning of justice for one's individual life and into different forms of life, including reflections on self-control and the real art of politics, are presented as related and following one from another. And even if we did not see the exact joints and sinews of the dialogue we would understand from the fierceness of its exchanges and urgency of its turning points that they are governed by some inner logic of struggle in which each subsequent opponent makes explicit some possible consequences of his predecessor's claims. But this kind of unity is not enough for understanding how the key subjects are intertwined and whether there is some inner necessity which makes from different strands of argumentation one philosophical argument connecting rhetoric (appearing in the original subtitle) with the search for "constitutional well-being" (Olympiodorus' definition of the dialogue's purpose).

Regarding the persuasiveness of individual arguments, it is again in general not an unusual query. Every reader of the dialogues knows that a philosophical argument advanced through the mouth of dramatic personae cannot be read without at least some caution and attention to more or less immediate contexts. The range of approaches which are typically adopted is notoriously large, starting with identification of Socrates' sheer irony on the one end, over the recognition of different levels of accommodating arguments according to a discussant's comprehension, while the other end of the spectrum is delimited by the possibility that an argument is simply, and unintentionally, incorrect. Though not entirely unique, the *Gorgias* seems to stand for a particular case in this field too. The whole aforementioned range of approaches is applied sometimes upon the very same argument by different interpreters, the question is repeatedly raised and answered whether Socrates refuted this one or that one (or any) of his opponents, and even a distance between Plato and Socrates is suggested to the extent that Socrates' failure to persuade is itself an argument

purportedly showing the limits of his method. The level of uncertainty seems to be higher in the case of the *Gorgias* than in many other dialogues and this creates an interesting contrast with the obvious importance of the whole of this particular argumentation for Plato's presentation and defence of Socrates.

A collective monograph, by the simple fact of not being a product of a single author, cannot offer a unifying interpretation of the whole of the dialogue, and a collection of interpretations, by not being a running commentary, cannot discuss the purpose and meaning of each of its arguments. But they can substantially help in both these directions. In addition to that, a collection of papers may offer a further benefit: variations of perspectives in a relatively short space, making thus clearer that reading Plato is not possible without constant examination, of the *interpretandum* as well as the *interpretans*. It is even more helpful if the interpretations enter into an implicit dialogue and this volume at least tries to create a space where interpretations do not merely coexist. It splits into three parts marking its three main subject areas – rhetoric, psychology and politics (understood as a way of life). These are different strands we find in the dialogue. Treating them separately does not mean that they are understood as separate. Rather, the division is here a dialectical means, in the sense given to the term in the *Phaedrus*, allowing for more meaningful synoptic view. This is also what the subtitle of this volume tries to suggest: the least we can say about the plan of the entire dialogue, without entering into any details, is that Plato's scrutiny of traditional rhetoric is supposed to show the necessity of insight into the soul and its motivation and this in turn leads to an understanding of the politics which, served by the right kind of speeches, can be carried out for the benefit of all.

The first contribution, by the author of this introduction, attempts to review the whole first part of the dialogue, the exchange with Gorgias, in the light of the possibility, elaborated in the dialogue, that rhetoric is a mere neutral tool, independent of any moral and ontological claims. It thus opens the perspectives which the following three contributions develop further. *Frisbee Sheffield* advances a view in which Socrates' opposition to certain practices of speech – to Gorgianic rhetoric, its hypothetical pretention of neutrality included – is based on his conviction that speech is supposed to promote certain values and help to build certain relations between people. *Jamie Dow* then defends the reading in which the alternative to the contemporary rhetoric proposed by Socrates under the name of "good rhetoric" is nothing else than his dialectical practice. Entering partly in a fruitful tension with the preceding chapter, *Tushar Irani* completes the reflection on rhetoric by an analysis of what rhetorical form, understood as something not consisting merely in dialectic, could be good for in Socrates' conversations.

The next chapter opens the subject of the psychological and moral implications of Gorgianic rhetoric. *Naly Thaler* deals with an aporetical situation, the one in Socrates' conversation with Polus and Callicles where action seems to be motivated by the good, on the one hand, and by pleasure on the other. The suggested solution lies in the proper understanding of the motivational notion of good in the *Gorgias*. *Louis-André Dorion* points to yet another apparent contradiction which emerges in the dialogue, that between *elenchos* and physical punishment which are both described as the means by which subjects can be purged of the greatest evil. The chapter by *Emilia Cucinotta* shifts the attention to the way the dialogue presents virtue and raises the question whether we can subscribe to the older interpretation which has identified in the *Gorgias* a change of the concept of excellence. Cucinotta argues that even the new manner of describing virtue in terms of order does not exclude the concept of virtue based on knowledge. *David Machek*'s chapter closes this part by a fresh analysis of Socrates' notorious and intriguing claim that wrongdoing is worse than suffering wrong.

The last part of the volume consists of three chapters which, in three different ways, take up a challenge of greater scope to which Socrates' exchange with Callicles, and especially the concluding passages of the dialogue, invite us. *Marie-Pierre Noël* pursues two clarifying parallels, the literary one between Euripides's *Antiope* and the *Gorgias*, and the conceptual one based on the former, between tragic hero and philosophical hero. *Veronika Konrádová* concentrates on the eschatological myth which in her reading has a different scope of application than is often thought since it is not limited to after-life experience but depicts the present life situation and has thus the same subject as Socrates' previous exchanges with different protagonists, pointing at and emphasizing the need of the soul's examination in this life. The last chapter, by *Michael Erler,* is particular in the sense that it returns back to several key notions of the dialogue, like the one of "true rhetoric", but observes them in the context of the whole of the dialogue and in the context of Socrates' statements in the *Apology*. He thus provides a chapter in which philosophical rhetoric, politics of care for others and defence against what we would call today populism come together as different strands offering Plato's perspective on Socrates' way of life and its meaning for the city and its citizens.

Vladimír Mikeš
Prague 2022

Acknowledgments

The origin of this volume lies in the *Twelfth Symposium Platonicum Pragense* where the majority of the papers selected for this book were presented. Three chapters were written later and some papers underwent substantial changes before they were submitted. The original meeting would not have been possible without the financial support of the Czech Plato Society – the symposium's main organizer – and the University Centre for the Study of the Classical and Medieval Intellectual Tradition, Charles University, Prague. This latter also contributed to the creation of the monograph, alongside two further institutions: the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Philosophy at University of Bern. Special thanks for the meticulous care and patience in proofreading of texts go to Michael Russo. We wish also to thank Helena Schoeb, editor in Philosophy at Brill, for her invaluable assistance and to both editors of the Plato Studies Series, Gábor Betegh and Gabriele Cornelli, for accepting the manuscript. Open access funding was provided by the University of Bern and swissuniversities.

PART 1

Rhetoric and Speech

CHAPTER 1

Is Ethically Neutral Rhetoric a Real Option for Plato?

Vladimír Mikeš

Abstract

Plato presents the result of the first part of the *Gorgias* as an *aporia* (460c–461a). Rhetoric as represented by Gorgias either includes knowledge and makes its user responsible for its use or does neither of these. This paper claims that Plato's aim in this part is twofold: to make as strong an argument as possible that rhetoric can be morally neutral and to show the shortcomings of that argument. It is equally important to see Plato's contribution to the concept of rhetoric's neutrality and his reasons to oppose this concept. The latter include a necessary relation of speaking to its subject.

Keywords

ethically neutral rhetoric – contradiction – argumentative failure – shame – speech – subject of speech – rhetoric and dialectic

1 The Question of Ethically Neutral Rhetoric[1]

When we look closely at the first part of the *Gorgias* we can easily distinguish features that lead some scholars to consider this particular dialogue to be Plato's masterpiece. If it were only a lively conversation in a rather complex setting of protagonists who seem to be endowed with real characters, it would probably not receive such praise. What makes the dialogue exceptional is its combination of this kind of life-like conversation, complex argumentation and a development that could be best called a dramatic plot (that is, a development which is not due only to the inner logic of argumentation and limitation on the

1 My special thanks to David Machek, Michael Russo and Frisbee Sheffield for written comments on this paper. The work on this publication was supported from European Social Fund-Project No. CZ.02.2.69/0.0/0.0/17_050/0007971.

side of Socrates' interlocutors to follow it properly). It is the combination of these three main features – arguments, characters and plot – which allows one to reread the major parts of the dialogue again and again in attempts to understand without getting bored.

The first part is perhaps the best example of this feature of the dialogue. However, it also shows how the combination of these features makes it difficult to find a fully satisfactory reading. There are many questions and many hesitations about how to understand the first part, or first act, as Charles Kahn calls it – Socrates' exchange with Gorgias and his refutation.[2] My aim here is to address the question in my title whether morally neutral rhetoric is considered seriously in the *Gorgias* and if not, why not. But let me first give two preliminary answers to a more basic question which probably comes to the mind of anybody familiar with the dialogue: can we and should we ask at all the question about morally neutral rhetoric? I answer both of these in the affirmative.

As for the question why we *can*, I want simply to refer to the passage 460c7–461b2 in which the exchange of Socrates and Gorgias culminates and where Socrates accuses Gorgias of contradiction: according to Socrates, Gorgias' claim that rhetoric is something that can be used justly or unjustly (460d3–4, 461a1) cannot be squared with implications of the fact, admitted also by Gorgias, that rhetoric is about the just and unjust (esp. 460e3–5). Socrates concludes that it is a contradiction of two statements (461a2) and that to find the truth would take a longer time (461b1–2). He therefore, at least formally, does not exclude the possibility of rhetoric that can be used justly or unjustly – rhetoric which was presented earlier in the dialogue and which I suggest to call *morally neutral*. By the end of the first act we can therefore ask whether this rhetoric has been in fact refuted in the argument with Gorgias (and Socrates for some reason presents it later, in the conclusion, as a contradiction) or has not been refuted so far (because Socrates has not yet presented any decisive argument against it) and will be refuted later. So, judged merely from the form of Socrates' conclusion of his argument against Gorgias, Plato might have considered the option of morally neutral rhetoric seriously.

As for the question why we *should* ask this question, I will just state what is probably obvious anyway: if rhetoric finds itself in the position to seek justification and if the question is raised whether it is a craft in its own right, then to reveal it as a morally neutral skill with its own technical rules opens a way to its defence. It is an important part of Aristotle's way to defend his concept of rhetoric which, famously, is a capacity to find real and apparent means

2 Charles Kahn, "Drama and Dialectics in Plato's *Gorgias*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 1 (1983): 75–121.

of persuasion (*Rhet.* I 1, 1355b15). The other, not less intriguing, reason is that there are important commentators, ancient and of today, whose mentions of morally neutral rhetoric show that the whole concept as it is introduced here is not very clear. Olympiodorus in his commentary integrates morally neutral rhetoric into his elaborate scheme while it is far from obvious that Plato's dialogue allows for it.[3] Charles Kahn claims that morally neutral rhetoric is a defensible concept but is not defended by Plato because he concentrates on the refutation of Gorgias for unrelated reasons, i.e. for supposed attributes of rhetoric that disqualify it despite this "perfectly defensible concept" of neutrality.[4] These references should suffice to make us understand that morally neutral rhetoric is an important notion and also that its appearance in the dialogue is puzzling.

Let us take these introductory remarks as the first, preliminary, justifications that the question of morally neutral rhetoric can be asked. The whole concept of rhetoric as a morally neutral skill involving the use of words (detached somehow from its morally relevant content) has a great importance for any later reflections on rhetoric and also for the history of rhetoric itself. Plato, if not at the origin of this concept (a claim on which this paper does not focus), is the one who puts it on display and contrasts it against another type of public speech. It is therefore of considerable interest to ask whether he takes this concept seriously or undermines it from the beginning. In order to fully appreciate this question, and also to see why it is not easily asked, it is necessary to observe how it actually emerges in the course of the dialogue in the context of the first part upon which I will now focus. I will claim that Plato considers morally neutral rhetoric as a serious possibility while showing at the same time that Gorgias himself – his chosen representative of rhetoric – does not take it seriously enough (and is not even able to defend it properly). This incapacity is part of Plato's own argument against morally neutral rhetoric – involved in those layers of the dialogue concerning character and plot; however, it is only a part because the final outcome of Plato's arguments should be understood in the sense that morally neutral rhetoric is not a defensible concept in itself. In other words: I will claim that Plato wants to exclude morally neutral rhetoric as a possibility.

3 See Olympiodorus, *In Plat. Gorg.* 3,9. It seems that Olympiodorus infers the existence of rhetoric which "in itself is neither good nor bad" from the fact that there are two basic kinds of rhetoric – true rhetoric and false one. See also 1,13; 7,2.

4 Kahn, "Drama and Dialectics," 84 (see also 81).

2 "First Act" – Structure of the Argument

So what actually happens on the way to Socrates' charge of contradiction? Plato raises the question of Gorgias' "art" (*techne*): of its "power" (*dunamis*) and "what it is" (*ti esti*), reminding everybody that Gorgias not only promotes it but also teaches it (447c). In response to these questions, after some conspicuously lengthy introductory remarks, Plato develops a series of arguments which gradually reveal rhetoric as:

1. something which has to do with speeches (449c9–e1);
2. something which has to do *merely* with speeches (449e1–450c2);
3. something which has to do with the speeches about the greatest of human affairs (450c2–451d8);
4. something which produces persuasion through speeches in courts, council and assembly and as such is a source of freedom and dominion and has nothing else to do but to produce persuasion (451d9–453a7);
5. something which produces persuasion in courts and in front of undistinguishable multitudes of people (*ochloi*) about the just and unjust (453a8–454c6);
6. and finally, something which produces non-instructive, that is conviction-based (or conviction-aiming), persuasion – *pisteutike peitho* – about the just and unjust (454c7–455a7).

Plato thus reveals stepwise the nature of rhetoric in relation to other arts and to other methods of achieving certain states of mind through persuasion. It is not an altogether calm and non-partial investigation (such as the one in the *Cratylus* where Socrates looks first at the one side and then at the other side of the argument). It presents Gorgias as a slow and not very witty thinker, all too ready to boast but betraying that he has not thought over the key concepts related to his own activity. At this stage of the dialogue, Plato already makes clear by a dramatic means what he thinks of Gorgias and he also represents him as gradually becoming aware that he is led somewhere where he does not want to be. Gorgias' activity – which he is supposed to show is an art – is finally put in stark contrast to knowledge, learning and truth as a mere conviction. At this point comes a slight turn after which the talk between Socrates and Gorgias takes a different pace and, to some extent, a different direction. There come two longer speeches of the two main protagonists. First there is a speech by Socrates (455a8–455d5) in which he elucidates a more patently political context of rhetoric than had been indicated thus far and makes a confession revealing his attitude to democracy and to the room it leaves for rhetoric in decisions about public matters: he refers to the role of experts (by arguments which resemble his similar claims elsewhere but which also contain some

rather unpersuasive points – can the experts Socrates refers to really decide correctly about the public matters he mentions?).[5] In Gorgias' reaction, the second of the longer speeches (456a7–457c3), we can distinguish a number of claims, of which four are crucial:

1. rhetoric has a power – it is actually all-powerful (it has a power to replace all other forms of expertise in so far as speech is concerned) (456a7–c4);
2. rhetoric has a power which is not limited to any particular subject – in some important sense it is *subject-free* (456c4–6);
3. rhetoric is to be distinguished from its use – it is *morally neutral* in a way similar to wrestling (and other contest-like exercises) (456c6–457b5);
4. the teacher of rhetoric is not responsible for the wrong use of it by his or her pupil (457b5–c3).

In this passage, Gorgias is given an opportunity to make sense of the awkward account he has presented thus far of his own craft, during which Plato depicted him partly as someone who gives answers to questions which have never occurred to him and partly as someone who is forced to say what he did not entirely want to say. Now it seems as if he finally gave his own answer to the repeated question of *peri ti* of rhetoric and his answer differs from what he said previously. He repeats Socrates' expression *peri* three times and always in the sense that there is *no* particular *peri ti* (456c4, 457a5, 457b1). This highlighted subject-independence of rhetoric, which stands in contrast to the former appointment of rhetoric to the domain of the just and unjust (454b6–7), is related to moral neutrality: they go hand in hand. The rhetorician is able to speak on any subject and *at the same time* fulfil his or her task as rhetorician, and then, on separate criteria, can be judged for his or her *use* (*chresthai*, 457b4) of rhetoric – whether he or she acted ethically. In other words, the fact that rhetoricians speak on whatever subject, and thus introduce themselves into the domains of other experts, does not imply here that they do something wrong, since rhetoricians can speak on any subject in a way which is open to wrong or good uses and, as such, is morally neutral. The example of "other combats" (*alle pase agonia,* 456c8) is clear in this respect: on the one hand, there are things such as wrestling, with its set of physical conditions which one has to acquire (*puktikos genomenos*, 456d6–7), and on the other its wrong use when it is directed against certain people (456d7–8). This distinction, when applied to rhetoric, makes sense only as a distinction between rhetoric as persuasion – Gorgias has just reminded us that this definition is not abandoned

5 There are surely technical aspects of building a harbour (455b6) or the military occupation of a land (455c1), but it cannot be up to these experts in any regime to decide whether to engage in such enterprises.

when he spoke about an orator's superior persuasiveness (456c5) – and the use of rhetoric observed in ethical terms. It is an attempt to make rhetoric a craft in its own right that can be evaluated independently of the moral implications of its use.

However, this analysis of subject-freedom and moral neutrality, and their relation, is somehow misleading because in the text they are intertwined with two other notions: power (*dunamis*) and responsibility of a teacher for a pupil. Subject-freedom is presented here not as a specific feature of rhetoric which sheds light on its nature, but as something which appears to be a necessary part of the power of rhetoric. Rhetoric has a power to speak on any subject, *therefore* it is a subject-free.[6] In other words, power is not presented as a consequence of subject-freedom but the other way round, with all the ambiguity of the term power – *dunamis* – in place. Gorgias the rhetorician, as presented by Plato, does not calmly describe a specific *capacity – dunamis* – of rhetoric, he is excited by a *power – dunamis* – rhetoric bestows upon orators. Undoubtedly, we can see in this a part of Plato's diagnosis.

As for the second notion – moral responsibility of a teacher – it is obvious that it makes a simple idea more complex and less transparent. As a matter of fact, the relation between the moral responsibility of the rhetorician for his action and the moral responsibility of the teacher for his pupil's action is not clear but this is the way the former is introduced in the dialogue. Some reasons for this approach are, however, directly obvious. Firstly, there is the whole historical context and what it implies as stakes: Gorgias, a foreigner, is teaching Athenian youths (a role we are reminded from the beginning of the dialogue). Then, from a logical point of view, it in fact allows Gorgias to emphasize the moral neutrality of rhetoric: a teacher can transmit this craft of rhetoric whereas its ethical use is up to the pupil – craft and its use, from moral point of view, are two different things. In sum, the key notions in the passage are connected as follows: because rhetoric has the power to make a speaker more persuasive on any subject, rhetoric is not related to any subject in particular; despite the power it has, rhetoric should not be misused; the fact that rhetoric can be misused, does not mean that teachers are responsible for the way it is used.

Whatever details we add to the interpretation of this important passage, the main claim is clear, namely that the moral ends that rhetoric can serve are not part of the craft of rhetoric itself. They are not completely disconnected,

6 See 456a8: ἁπάσας τὰς δυνάμεις συλλαβοῦσα ὑφ' αὑτῇ ("how it comprises in itself practically all powers"); 456c6: ἡ μὲν οὖν δύναμις τοσαύτη ἐστὶν καὶ τοιαύτη τῆς τέχνης· ("so great, so strange, is the power of this art"). Trans. W. R. M. Lamb.

though, because a rhetorician (to the greater extent than a wrestler) cannot but use his craft with respect to some moral end and is therefore obliged to use it rightly or wrongly; rhetoric and its use are thus connected in the person of rhetorician who has on the one hand the capacity of the craft and on the other hand the capacity to use it rightly or wrongly. Even if a requirement emerges that a rhetorician should use his craft justly – as actually Gorgias explicitly says[7] – it is not a requirement imposed on a craft but on a person.

What then happens after Gorgias' profession on the short way to the stark conclusion of the first part? After a long intermezzo, which consists mainly of methodological remarks (a golden thread running through the dialogue and putting dialectic on the stage as an important counterpoint to rhetoric), Socrates focuses on one point from what has been said: the power of rhetoricians to be more persuasive than experts. Plato shows what it implies, according to him, to be more persuasive in conviction-based persuasion of the multitude, namely to persuade ignorant persons despite one's own ignorance, which in turn implies that rhetoricians appear as knowledgeable in front of ignorant persons. The device of persuasion (*mechane tina peithous*), which famously takes the place here of knowledge of real being, is in fact outlined as an instrument for creating the appearance of knowledge. Otherwise this rhetorical persuasion would apparently not work. A rhetorician should be able to simulate the appearance of having the knowledge of good and bad without having it.

This image of rhetoric is obviously intended to be shocking, to denounce rhetoric without further argument, and as Gorgias does not oppose it, it is like an accusing finger pointed at him. Socrates then reveals how shocking this image is by questioning Gorgias about exactly what he teaches and returning to the problem of the rhetorician's lack of knowledge. Three possibilities are then considered:

1. The student is obligated to acquire knowledge of good and bad before undertaking training in rhetoric. (459e1–3)
2. There is no need of preliminary knowledge of good and bad (and the pupil learns to pretend knowledge). (459e3–6)
3. It is *impossible* to learn rhetoric without preliminary knowledge of good and bad. (459e6–8)

It is suggested that it is perhaps necessary to know about the good and the bad before starting to learn this art of rhetoric (first option) or it is perhaps impossible to learn rhetoric at all if knowledge of just and unjust and good and bad

7 *Grg*. 457b7–c1: "For he imparted [i.e. teacher of the rhetoric] that skill to be used in all fairness, whilst this man puts it to an opposite use."

is not already acquired (third option). Plato thus suggests that the situation might be different and that the rhetorician might actually know what is the just and unjust. To the three possibilities offered by Socrates, Gorgias adds the fourth:

4. A rhetorician teaches what is good and bad. (460a3–4)

From that response Plato draws very swiftly to his conclusion, through a notorious (and notoriously problematic) application of a variant on relation of the will and the just or more particularly through the tenet "who knows the just is just and never wants to do wrong",[8] accusing Gorgias of *contradiction*. The purported contradiction consists in the claim that a rhetorician can use rhetoric unjustly, doing wrong, and that a rhetorician can never do wrong, i.e. is always just (460c7–460e2). In the explanation of the contradiction which immediately follows, Plato makes clear that it is the definition of the *peri ti* of rhetoric as the just and unjust which in his view cannot be squared with the possibility of the unjust use of it (460e2–461a4).

3 Problems

So far the text. There are many questions which can be asked about this whole series of arguments, and many of them are reflected in the general question which has been frequently raised by interpreters – did Plato's Gorgias really contradict himself and, if he did, is there any logical necessity that required him to do so?

Looking at some frequently quoted interpretations, there can be no doubt that something about this whole strain of arguments is not quite right. There is actually an ongoing discussion about the form and strength of Plato's arguments against Gorgias.

So, Robinson claims that in fact we have not here contradiction but refutation,[9] Irwin points at Gorgias' admission or forced claim which makes

8 The tenet "who knows the just wants to do the just" does not imply, of course, that even a person "who does not know the just and is doing what is not just wants to do the just" (which I take to be the core of the paradox of unwilling wrongdoing). However, the former does not exclude the latter either. These two claims can be taken as two complementary sides of one coin because they might manifest the same understanding of the relation knowledge-good-will (and the present passage does not show anything which would contradict this). Problematic aspects of Socrates' argument here are, firstly, the analogy between knowledge of the just and knowledge of the music or medicine and, secondly, the argumentative step from knowing the just to being just.

9 Richard Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic* (Ithaca-New York: Cornell University Press, 1941), 30–31. For Robinson it is a case of refutation which is erroneously presented as contradiction.

him lose the argument (implication between learning what is just and being just).[10] Kahn claims that the whole argument is *ad hominem* because while "a morally neutral rhetoric can be consistently stated", Gorgias in his situation had to admit that he teaches justice, otherwise he would be lost in the eyes of his public.[11] And Alessandra Fussi suggests that Plato is distanced here even from Socrates and his arguments.[12] All of these interpretations question (or at least address the question of) the logical necessity of the inferences that led Gorgias into contradiction, and they thereby call into doubt whether Gorgias' self-contradiction implies anything about rhetoric in general as a way of speaking and an approach to speech. For example, Irwin points to sentences through which Gorgias made fatal errors *he could have avoided*,[13] while Kahn argues that Gorgias was forced into some of his claims *for external reasons* (being ashamed). An argument *ad hominem* would have certain force if it was the real Gorgias – the representative of a specific form of speech of his day – speaking with Socrates, but such an argument is much less persuasive when staged by one author and when we cannot be sure whether the character under attack corresponds to the represented person. Dodds is the only one among the regularly cited interpreters who holds that there is a contradiction and moreover a contradiction between statements which truly represent the historical Gorgias.[14] The problem, however, is that he identifies the statements differently than Robinson and Irwin. What is the cause of this confusion?[15]

10 Terence Irwin, *Plato:* Gorgias*, Translated with Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 126–127. Irwin actually follows Robinson in suggesting that there is no contradiction in Gorgias' views; instead Socrates provides a refutation on the premisses he introduced himself but did not prove, and for this reason "the argument against Gorgias is illegitimate as it stands" (126–127).

11 Kahn, "Drama and Dialectic," 84.

12 Alessandra Fussi, "Socrates' Refutation of Gorgias," *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 17,1 (2002): 124.

13 Irwin actually claims that "the 'disharmony' is between Gorgias' views and Socrates' views, not internal to Gorgias' views". Irwin, *Gorgias*, 128.

14 Dodds, *Plato*: Gorgias*, Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 220. Dodds in fact opposes Robinson in saying that he did not identify the contradiction correctly.

15 The references here are deliberately limited to a handful of chosen and mainly older interpretations which represent different approaches that are sustainable and (to a great extent) still shared. They allow us to see the core of the problem which has not yet been overcome. Beside already cited Alessandra Fussi ("Socrates' Refutation of Gorgias"), other more recent views are, e.g., the following ones: R. Barney, "Gorgias' Defense: Plato and his Opponents on Rhetoric and the Good," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 48,1 (2010); G. R. Carone, "Socratic Rhetoric in the *Gorgias*," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 35,2 (2005); M. McCoy, *Plato on the Rhetoric of Philosophers and Sophists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 85–110.

It certainly has to do with the fact that the contradiction, as stated in the conclusion, is actually not between two beliefs which Plato's character Gorgias is shown to firmly hold (as when Plato's character Cratylus claims that everything is in constant flux and that we can recognize the natures of things through their names),[16] but between his statements and consequences of another statement, namely that rhetoric has as its subject the just and unjust, which Gorgias is rather forced to make after considerable hesitation. The fact that the consequences do not clearly follow and the fact that he is forced, both make a contradiction difficult to seize. Indeed, we can and probably should ask whether Gorgias should accept that rhetoric produces something good (452b–c). We should probably ask whether, when rhetoric speaks about the just and unjust in the courts, it manifests the same *peri ti* like medicine (454b).[17] We should probably also ask whether it is obvious that he who persuades in order to produce a belief is successful only in so far as he pretends to have knowledge (459c). And certainly we should ask whether from the assumption that rhetoric has a subject it follows that a rhetorician should teach it and that he *can* teach it (460a). And we should indeed ask how it follows from the fact that somebody knows what is just that he or she *is* just (when it is supported merely by a questionable and extremely laconic analogy with crafts) (460b–c).[18]

The contradiction is also not evident because it looks as if the whole argument could be more comprehensible if it was reformulated as a step-by-step refutation of Gorgias on premises which Socrates makes him accept (and which are therefore not a part of Gorgias' concepts). We can imagine, in a sort of a thought-experiment, that Gorgias could simply start by defending his concept of rhetoric as subject-free and morally neutral, and then, examined by Socrates, he could be led to his admission of teaching justice and its apparent consequences. This is not a suggestion that Plato should have written his dialogue differently but merely a way to point out that the contradiction-conclusion and the complex way it is brought up in the dialogue might have a specific role here because it sticks out as something a bit artificial, and works to the detriment of a straightforward understanding of the whole argument (as the struggle of interpreters proves). I disagree thus with Robinson's reading that Gorgias' claim about the lack of responsibility is "refuted in a perfectly

16 See *Crat*. 435d, 437a, 440a–d.

17 For a progressive build-up of the analogy see *Grg*. 449e–450a, 452a.

18 For affirmation that the inference is meant seriously see Dodds, *Gorgias*, 218. His, partly historical, explanation is however also a proof that the inference should be subject of inquiry.

direct manner".[19] I believe that the construction of the whole argumentation as leading to a contradiction is a purposeful form on the part of Plato.[20] I disagree however with Dodds as well by not seeing in the contradiction something which is clearly present in what Gorgias (or even the historical Gorgias) says or correctly accepts, obscured perhaps to our modern views by some anachronistic concepts.[21] I disagree finally also with Kahn because I don't think that the contradiction is construed merely *ad hominem*.[22]

From a formal point of view, I assume that we should see the following: Plato confronts two concepts which represent two legitimate ways of seeing rhetoric; namely, as a craft intrinsically related to a subject and as a skill that is subject-free. To present them as Gorgias' contradiction is to say that they are not clearly distinguished. They contradict one another because before they are distinguished they can be held by any single person; they actually look as if they were part of one general concept of rhetoric in so far as it is a vague concept emerging from certain praxis and is not examined.[23]

If this reading is right, is there any further sense we can see in the charge of contradiction? When Plato makes Socrates and Gorgias discuss what Gorgias' art is, Plato starts measuring rhetoric against a standard of a highly demanding concept of craft which has its subject, the subject embedded in an external being, through which the production of *techne* is defined (later we will learn that such a craft must know the causes and lead to something good). With his eyes on this concept, he offers a view of rhetoric as something related to a subject and he opens a double alternative: either rhetoric is a *techne* which knows its subject, or it is one that pretends to know its subject. To know or to pretend to have knowledge are the only two options and rhetoric falls in the second category. This is one strand of the argument, which makes rhetoric appear unfavourably in the light of knowledge-teaching-truth. But Plato also creates room for a display of a different concept of rhetoric: rhetoric which is

19 Robinson, *Dialectic*, 30.

20 I actually believe that the contradiction-argument in the *Gorgias* in particular shows that Robinson's claim about Plato's incapacity to distinguish the contradiction from refutation is difficult to hold. The whole procedure gives rather the impression that the more laborious way of undoing Gorgias is a conscious choice on the part of the author. See n. 9.

21 See Dodds, *Gorgias*, 218 for claims that Greeks judged moral conduct in terms of knowledge not of will as we do.

22 For similar view see M. McCoy who claims that Gorgias is consistently holding the concept of neutral rhetoric (his original position) while being forced into claims about knowledge of justice by Socrates. McCoy, *Plato on the Rhetoric of Philosophers and Sophists*, 89. See also Irwin in n. 13.

23 See Barney, "Gorgias' Defense," 104, for a similar conclusion (though combined with the claim about *ad hominem* character of the *elenchus*, ibid. 106).

subject-free and consequently morally neutral, a technique of which we don't learn how exactly it proceeds, but of which we are made to understand that it does not necessarily have a particular subject, a subject that can be known and taught, and which can be used like well-mastered bodily techniques for bad as well as good purposes. The opposition of these two concepts is the main asset of Socrates' exchange with Gorgias. Whether Plato's character Gorgias contradicts himself while speaking about these two forms of rhetoric is less important. For that matter, Plato makes it part of his dramaturgic setting and plot development, because Polus identifies Gorgias' contradiction elsewhere, independently of its exposure by Socrates. For Polus, Gorgias made the mistake of claiming to know what is the just and unjust and to teach these – the famous case of Gorgias' shame (461b4–c1) – whereas for Socrates the contradiction lies deeper, in Gorgias' supposition that rhetoric has a subject and, at the same time, is morally neutral. Either it has a subject and that implies some knowledge and related matters like responsibility for its transmission (leaving aside now the clarity of these implications) *or* it is a morally neutral skill. It does not look as if for Plato the charge of contradiction was an indication of where rhetoric really fails, it is just one layer of his *analysis* of the rhetoric of his time. This rhetoric represents a confused concept because it does not distinguish between subject-free and subject-related conceptions of rhetoric. Gorgias, the rhetorician, is lost when he is supposed to defend his rhetoric; he cannot show what this subject-free and morally neutral rhetoric would be and cannot defend it, to a great extent because he sees rhetoric as an instrument that serves something which is not morally neutral at all, namely gaining power. This is what Plato wants to tell his reader by construing the argument as contradiction; his primary intention is not simply to make the reader believe that the problem of rhetoric consists in trying to maintain two claims which do not fit together. No doubt we should pay attention to the form of the argument but we should not exhaust ourselves in evaluating whether and where exactly Gorgias might have replied to Socrates more effectively in defence of rhetoric. There are many places where Gorgias was not obliged to argue as he did, but this does not change the facts that (a) there are two concepts of rhetoric, one craft-like, the other morally neutral, and (b) these contradict one another. This reading, which allows us to pass over what has often been considered weaknesses of the first part of the dialogue, gives inevitably more importance to the concept of morally neutral rhetoric. Plato takes this concept seriously because *this* – and not the boasting of the slightly witless and unstable Gorgias – is the real opponent of the craft-like rhetoric. In other words, the problem with rhetoric is not that it is defended by particular people who do not know whether

they do or do not teach justice but that it can be conceived in two ways which are not compatible and still be taken for one coherent notion.

But if Plato presents morally neutral rhetoric as a real possibility, does this mean that he really takes it to be equivalent to the possibility of craft-like rhetoric (and therefore presents the problem of rhetoric as a mere contradiction of two statements between which it is impossible to decide on the basis of arguments advanced in the first part)? Is Kahn right that, by the end of the first part, we may still think that a morally neutral rhetoric is a perfectly defensible concept?[24] And is Olympiodorus right when he makes us believe that morally neutral rhetoric is and will remain an option which can be integrated in the typically neo-Platonic systematized scheme, somewhere below the true rhetoric of philosophically educated rhetorician?[25] There are good reasons to doubt this and they are different than those reasons implicit in the later revelation of rhetoric as mere flattery which falls shorts of any *techne*.

4 Plato's Undermining of Morally Neutral Rhetoric

Plato uses the complex argumentation of the first part to do two things at the same time: to offer the concept of morally neutral rhetoric as the strongest argument of the Gorgianic rhetoric while also suggesting where the real problem of this concept lies. It is important to ask ourselves why the rhetoric which Plato advances as an alternative to Gorgias' view obliges the rhetorician to be just. It is not because it would be somehow attached to another craft – politics – which would define its goal, as Olympiodorus will have it,[26] and thus would make it just. It is not like that for Plato at least in the first part of the dialogue.[27] It is because this rhetoric is not subject-free and its subject is the just and unjust. Plato's Socrates seems to make a claim that if you speak about the good – and just is for him here clearly one kind of good which cannot be detached from other kinds (459d) – you cannot do it in a morally neutral way. I take here a negation of "a morally neutral way" as a larger concept than having the knowledge of just and being just. It is, I believe, justified by the exchange of Socrates and Gorgias on a transmission of rhetoric from master to pupils which in the first respect points to a concern about the good and the just, identified

24 See also Carone, "Socratic Rhetoric," 223.
25 See n. 3.
26 See Olympiodorus, *In Plat. Gorg*. 2,4; see also 1,13; 6,1.
27 See however *Grg*. 521d.

earlier as privileged subjects of rhetoric,[28] rather than a transmission of knowledge.[29] If we leave aside the later claims about knowledge of the just (and its implication of being just) we have here a claim which points to a fragility of the concept of the neutral rhetoric: how to assure a concern for the good and just if it is not part of what the rhetorician transmits to students of rhetoric; how to impart rhetoric *for a fair use* while not taking interest in this use at all?

The impossibility of neutrality implied by the subject seems to be a stronger claim than Dodds believes Plato to make, namely that a society cannot afford a morally neutral education.[30] Dodds' claim corresponds in fact to Christof Rapp's reading in which the main problem of morally neutral rhetoric for Plato is identified as the tendency to misuse rhetoric.[31] Plato is no doubt aware of the risk of misuse – as is shown on the level of his *ad hominem* arguments and will become even clearer in Socrates' exchange with Polus and Callicles – but his main claim seems to be stronger.[32] Socrates' examination of rhetoric in light of crafts is Plato's way to show that a rhetoric that does not address its subject correctly is not at all entitled to deal with that subject, where "correctly" means in the way which concerns the truth of the subject and the knowledge of it. For this reason also the rhetorical technique which does not have these concerns can function merely by pretending to have them – it has to pretend

28 "Privileged" because Gorgias speaks about his capacity to persuade patients of his brother doctor. This can be taken as included in the subject of the justice (is it good or not, just or not to undergo this treatment?).

29 See *Grg*. 457a3–4, 457b4, 457b7–c1 where Gorgias while presenting the concept speaks about the incorrect use of rhetoric (*hoi me chromenoi oimai orthos*) and transmission of the skill for a fair use (*ekeinos men gar epi dikaia chreia paredoken*).

30 Dodds, *Gorgias*, 10.

31 See Christof Rapp, Aristoteles: *Rhetorik*. Übersetzung, Einleitung und Kommentar, Zweiter Band (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002), 120: "denn Platon steigert im *Gorgias* die bekannte Missbrauchsgefahr geradezu zu einer Missbrauchs*tendenz*".

32 See J. S. Murray for a similar conclusion though based on different view. The problem with Murray's otherwise important analysis is that it aims at proving that Gorgias, the character of the dialogue, is not entitled to compare rhetoric to genuinely morally neutral sports like boxing *because of* what this same character said about rhetoric before, namely that it seeks power and enslavement of others. But this does not differ from conclusion offered explicitly by Plato that this character contradicts himself. The difference is that Murray insists that boxing-analogy is not to be taken seriously because rhetoric is not like boxing. I prefer to read the analogy as a serious option offered by Plato in the mode of dialectical examination of how to think about rhetoric differently. Nevertheless, I believe, as Murray does, that Plato is *via* his examination also compromising the very concept of neutrality. J. S. Murray, "Plato on Power, Moral Responsibility and the Alleged Neutrality of Gorgias' Art of Rhetoric (*Gorgias* 456c–457b)," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 34,4 (2001).

them at least. That is to say that Plato points to something that can be called a structural dependence of an activity that is not self-contained, as it were, but is about something. This is however not enough because this counts also for crafts or arts like medicine or money-making. In the case of rhetoric the activity is speaking and the subject of this speaking is identified as the just. Such an activity simply cannot avoid having some concern about truth and knowledge of the just. The morally neutral rhetoric does not appear here as merely risky and constantly on a slippery slope (danger of misuse) but as something of which it is not at all clear what it is. It would be speaking about the just without really speaking about it. Because once again: speaking about something seems to mean for Plato to be concerned with the thing which means to be concerned with the truth and knowledge. Gorgias defends a relation of morally neutral rhetoric to something essentially external (independent knowledge of the just and separate teaching of it) that would furnish, as it were, the concern for the truth and knowledge. But such a defence would need a much more robust concept than Gorgias proposes, or in fact than anybody in Plato's time could propose. One such concept of rhetoric will be Aristotle's, who will conceive it as an art of speaking about something, really saying something about it without aiming at the truth and knowledge.[33]

We should notice that in this reading morally neutral rhetoric is not disqualified by Plato's leaning towards the concept of rhetoric based on its inclusion into a highly demanding concept of craft which involves knowledge.[34] My suggestion is to see different layers in Socrates' criticism. Even if we leave aside knowledge of the just and being just as two final implications of the

33 It is famously a discipline parallel to dialectic, neither of which in Aristotle's view will have a proper subject and both of which will be capable of proving opposites (i.e. will be ethically neutral, though in a qualified way). See *Rhetoric* I 1, 1355a29–35; I 2, 1356a31–33; 1356a26–27. It is reasonable and certainly possible to read first book of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as a continuation of the discussion from the first part of the *Gorgias* and of the parallel discussion in the *Phaedrus*. The light shed by Aristotle's *Rhetoric* on the concept suggested by Plato is important because it shows how uneasy it is to construe a rhetoric as a "formal discipline" concerned with the forms of speech. See Irwin's comparison, in the context of the question of ethical neutrality, between rhetoric and formal logic. Irwin, *Gorgias*, 117. See also H. W. Ausland, "Socrates' Argument with Gorgias, the Craft Analogy, and the Justice," in *Gorgias – Menon*, ed. M. Erler, L. Brisson (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2007), 161.

34 Cf. S. Marchand and P. Ponchon, *«Gorgias» de Platon, suivi de* «Éloge *d'Hélène» de Gorgias* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2016), 32; H. Teloh, "Rhetoric, Refutation, and What Socrates believes in Plato's *Gorgias*," *Proceedings of the Boston Areas Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 23 (2007), 59. On this point, see also Ausland, "Socrates' Argument," 161, and A. D. Sørensen, *Plato on Democracy and Political* technē (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 38.

concept which emerges from the examination (with a role played by social shame, the logical necessity of which is hard to evaluate), we should be able to see that morally neutral rhetoric is put in question. But we can go even further following Socrates' argumentation backwards and claim that having a subject already contradicts a morally neutral rhetoric. The key stake here, however, lies in the notion of speaking. It appears that speaking for Plato cannot but be structured by its subject in the sense that one is obliged to say something about it – either one instructs or merely persuades resting on some opinion which includes also an option of mere sponging on the instruction (by pretending knowledge). This is where the analogy with other crafts – those not consisting entirely in speaking – ceases to show the way because their relation to their *peri ti* is different. Their *peri ti* is primarily realised in making on which their speaking is dependent; in the case of the craft consisting merely in speaking, the relation might be considered by some as open but Plato shows that for him it is not: if one speaks about something one must have *at least* an opinion about the thing (and opinions split into those that are true and those that are false). He does not admit a possibility to step out of the intentional relation between speaking and its subject.[35] He does not admit a rhetoric as a discipline concerned with a mere form.

This conclusion about morally neutral subject-free rhetoric comes forth in the first part of the *Gorgias* even more clearly thanks to the contrast with another technique that is concerned exclusively with speech, which Plato playfully puts on stage – dialectic. Dialectic is conspicuously absent from the division of persuasion into teaching and belief-aiming persuasion though it is already very present at that point in the dialogue through long methodological remarks (which otherwise may appear strange and tedious).[36] Plato makes clear that there is a technique which is somewhere in between teaching and mere persuasion in what concerns truth and knowledge. Whereas teaching

35 It is interesting to compare the *Phaedrus* on this point. In the latter dialogue Plato obviously deals with the same problem of neutrality (*Phdr.* 260d–262c). Putting the neutrality in question or undoing the neutrality is different there because it depends on the notion of *antilogike* – a skill to make arguments pro and contra by little steps – and boils down to the accusation that those who would persuade without knowing the subject under discussion would get easily lost. One cannot be sure to persuade without knowing the subject. The common feature of Plato's doubt or attack in both dialogues, despite their different approaches, is that speaking cannot be detached from its subject. On the differentiation between dialectic and rhetoric in the *Gorgias* see A. Stauffer, *The Unity of Plato's Gorgias. Rhetoric, Justice, and the Philosophic Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 19–20.

36 See *Grg.* 449b4–8, 453c1–4, 454b9–c5, 457c4–458a3.

imparts knowledge based on truth, and mere persuasion creates (*poiein*) *true or false belief* in the soul of listeners (452e9–453a5), dialectic seeks to achieve *true opinion* by eliminating the greatest evil – *false opinion* (*doxa pseudes*, 458a5–b1) – on the way to the object of its desire which is *knowledge* of the subject of speech (453a8–b3).[37] This contrast of rhetoric and dialectic in itself is, of course, not an argument against rhetoric, nor morally neutral rhetoric. Nevertheless, it shows with sufficient clarity what Plato's view on morally neutral rhetoric is: if there is a serious endeavour in speech which is not teaching it can only be something which seeks the truth because truth makes this endeavour what it is – speech with a purpose that cannot be morally neutral because it concerns the soul and its content. Dialectic cannot be detached from its purpose. How then can any other technique with speech be so?[38]

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37 The division between a rhetorician persuading others about opinions and Socrates persuading himself about the truth is very stark at this place.

38 See Frisbee Sheffield's paper in this volume for an analysis of the further development of Plato's deconstruction of the moral neutrality of speech in the *Gorgias*. I take any necessary features of the correct speech indicated by Plato later in the dialogue to be situated in this steadily elaborated difference between two kinds of speech.

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CHAPTER 2

The Value of Communication in the *Gorgias*: Modelling Value in Speech

Frisbee C.C. Sheffield

Abstract

This paper argues that speech is not an ethically neutral tool, as Gorgias had supposed at the start of the dialogue. It attends to the normative dimension of practices of speech in Plato's *Gorgias*, with particular attention to Socratic dialogue. It argues that specific channels of communication need to be fostered not solely because speech transmits ideas, but because *how* one communicates establishes relationships which exemplify, or inhibit, value. Just as Gorgianic rhetoric establishes a relationship between persons in which a speaker dominates and, as such, it is a manifestation of power, so Socratic dialogue establishes relationships of various kinds, forged by "*koinonia*, *philia,* orderliness, moderation and justice", which express "geometrical equality"; this fosters harmony and *kosmos* in accordance with the world-view expressed by Socrates (507e–508a). Attention to the normative value of the activity of dialogue shows that value is intrinsic to its practice and not something which falls exclusively outside of its activity in an end product (a definitional one). This supports a broader conclusion that neither rhetoric nor dialogue are ethically neutral tools and shows how the twin concerns of the *Gorgias* (rhetoric and ethics) come together.

Keywords

rhetoric – dialogue – ethics – speech – virtue – friendship – community – justice – moderation – cosmos

1 Introduction

> In most cases of people actually talking to one another, human communication cannot be reduced to information. The message not only involves, it is, a relationship between speaker and hearer.[1]

Near the start of Plato's *Gorgias*, Gorgias argues that rhetoric is an ethically neutral tool, which can be used justly or unjustly; those who teach the skill of persuasion are not to be blamed for the ends its serves (456d–457c).[2] As the dialogue proceeds, the relationship between persuasion and value becomes more intimate than this suggests and ethical concerns take centre stage.[3] How value enters the account, though, is not entirely clear. A plausible thought is that speech is used to convey information, which has ethical content. Rhetoric in the law courts and the assembly (454b), or Socratic discussion about ethical terms, enables the sharing of insights and assists judgment about things such as justice (455a). Since the speech under consideration aims to persuade (453e), or to teach (453a5, 455a, 460a3–4), it communicates information in such a way that leads people to act on it, e.g. by building the walls of Athens, or its dockyards (456a); hence it produces great power for the speaker.[4] This thought gives speech epistemic value and ethical value in virtue of its ability to inform behaviour; it does nothing to thwart the possibility that rhetoric is an ethically neutral tool, however. Here is a thought that might: as a relational practice, speech establishes relationships of various kinds – between the participants, within the souls of those who participate, and within a *logos* itself; those relationships *exemplify* value and are not, or not solely, an instrumental means to its acquisition. This paper explores that contention.

Gorgias' claim that rhetoric seeks "freedom for oneself and control over others", for example, exposes rhetoric as a relationship in which other persons are "enslaved" to the speaker (452e1–8); as Dodds suggested, this conception of speech comes to fruition in Callicles' account of the strong man

1 Ursula K. E. Le Guin, "Telling is Listening," in *The Wave in the Mind: Talk and Essays on the Writer, the Reader, and the Imagination* (Boston: Shambala, 2004), 187. I thank Seunghyun Angela Yeo for this reference.

2 See Vladimír Mikeš's paper in this volume, especially pages 7–9.

3 Given the centrality of ethical concerns to this work (472c, 487e, 500c, 527c), the unity of the dialogue has been contested. On this issue, see Eric R. Dodds, *Plato: Gorgias, Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 53.

4 This holds for Socratic speech, too; see 488a6–b1 where Socrates says that if one has agreed to something in argument, then one should be found acting in accordance with what has been agreed.

(483a–484c).[5] This paper explores Socrates' practice of speech to argue that dialogue is not a value-neutral mode of speech, but a practice in which a "way of life" is expressed and generated; it has an ethical fruit of its own. Just as Gorgianic rhetoric establishes a relationship between persons in which a speaker dominates and, as such, it is a manifestation of power, so Socratic dialogue establishes relationships of various kinds, forged by "*koinonia*, *philia,* orderliness, moderation and justice", which express "geometrical equality", to foster harmony and *kosmos* (507e–508a). Attention is given to these five structural values because they govern relationships within "wholes", be this in the world (Section 2), a community, or the soul (Section 3), to constitute functioning unities, of which, crucially, a *logos* is itself an example (Section 4). Specific channels of communication need to be fostered for those participating in a *logos* not just because speech transmits ideas, which may have ethical import, but because how one communicates establishes (or thwarts) relationships expressive of harmony and *kosmos*. Seen as such, value is intrinsic to the practice of speech and not something which falls outside its activity in some end product, or result. Hence neither rhetoric nor dialogue are ethically neutral tools.

2 Value in the World

One might wonder whether Socrates has a substantial normative framework in the *Gorgias*, which is exemplified in dialogue, as I propose; the refutational format makes it difficult to extract positive views.[6] And yet, towards the end, Socrates presents a world-view.

> T1: What the wise say is that heaven and earth and gods and men are bound together by community, friendship, orderliness, self-control and justice (κοινωνία φιλία καὶ κοσμιότης καὶ σωφροσύνη καὶ δικαιότης), and this is why my friend, they call the whole a world order, not a disorder or indiscipline. In your wisdom you pay no attention to these things, as far as I can see. You haven't realised that geometrical equality has great power

5 Dodds, *Gorgias*, 15: "Gorgias' teaching is the seed of which the Calliclean way of life is the poisonous fruit".

6 Note that Socrates takes the role of both questioner and answerer in this work (e.g. 462b1–3), and the elenchus is deployed more constructively (on which, see Gregory Vlastos, "Was Polus Refuted?", *The American Journal of Philology* 88,4 (1967): 454–60. The scholar who does most to articulate Socrates' normative framework in the *Gorgias* is Raphael Woolf, "Callicles and Socrates: Psychic (Dis)harmony in Plato's *Gorgias*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 18 (2000).

> among gods and among men, and so you think you have to practise grabbing as much as you can. You should do more geometry. (507e–508a)[7]

What is under consideration here is a "whole", comprising many parts – heaven and earth, men and gods – "bound" by five values into an orderly system (*kosmos*). This is presented as a model for emulation, looking towards which human beings can discern the value of order, and appreciation of which is gleaned from geometry.

Before exploring how these five values are both theorised and exemplified in the account of the ideal speaker, this framework needs to be clarified.[8] No

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7 Unless otherwise indicated all translations are from Tom Griffith and Malcolm Schofield, *Plato: Gorgias, Menexenus, Protagoras* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

8 Identifying "the wise" would help here. A natural referent is the Pythagoreans, who called the universe a *kosmos* and believed it was underpinned by mathematical laws (Aristoteles, *Met.* 986a2; Diogenes Laertius VIII 48 on Pythagoras). See Dodds, *Gorgias*, 337; William. K. C. Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 300; Malcolm Schofield, "Plato in his Time and Place," in *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, ed. G. Fine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 47; Sarah Ahbel-Rappe, "Cross Examining Happiness in Plato's Socratic Dialogues," in *Ancient Models of Mind: Studies in Divine and Human Rationality*, ed. A. Nightingale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 41. Philip Sidney Horky, "When Did *Kosmos* Become the *Kosmos*?" in *Cosmos in the Ancient World*, ed. P. S. Horky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 32, identifies Philolaus as a likely candidate. See also Laura Rosella Schluderer, "The World as Harmony: Philolaus' Metaphysics of Harmonic Structure and the Hierarchy of Living Beings," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 56 (2019). Another popular candidate has been Archytas. Carl Huffman, *Archytas of Tarentum: Pythagorean, Philosopher and Mathematician King* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 208 compares Archytas Fragment 3: "Once calculation (*logismos*) was discovered, it stopped discord and increased concord (*homonoia*). For people do not want more than their share (*pleonexia*) and equality (*isotas*) exists, once this has come into being". But Huffman argues that "the specific emphasis on the geometric mean in the [*Gorgias*] passage does not make much sense as a reference to Archytas fragment 3, where the geometric mean is not singled out." The mention of *logismos* in Fragment 3, though, may relate this fragment to Archytas' concern with the study of ratio and proportion, which he called *logistike*, a study concerned with the quantity of number and with what quantity numbers have in relation to one another; i.e. with the application of proportion (compare *logistike* at *Gorgias* 451c, which is concerned with "what amount the odd and the even have both in themselves and in respect to one another"). "The wise" could also include many Presocratics who saw equality as preserving the order of nature and securing cosmic justice, on which see Gregory Vlastos, "Equality and Justice in Early Greek Cosmologies," in *Studies in Presocratic Philosophy*, ed. D. Furley and R. E. Allen (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 56–91. For *philia* as a cosmic power, Empedocles (B35) seems a precursor, with B26 which talks of things coming together by love (*philia*) into *kosmos*. Heraclitus B30 talks of *kosmos* (though whether this refers to "order" or to an "orderly *world*" is not clear; on which see Gregory Vlastos, *Plato's Universe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 6.

detail is given on the study of geometry, or "geometrical equality".[9] The sense of geometry may be gleaned from Socrates' earlier claim to speak as the geometers do (*hoi geometroi*, 465b–c) by introducing proportionalities: "as fashion is to training, so the skill of the sophist is to the science of the legislator, and as cookery is to medicine, so rhetoric is to justice" (465c1–3). This suggests that geometry here is concerned with the relationship between two things when the quantities of the two are equal in ratios, in other words, with the application of proportion.[10] "Geometrical equality" might then refer to proportional equality, the treatment of persons or groups according to their due, of which Plato gives an account in the *Laws* (VI 757c).[11] Since appreciation of geometrical equality underpins the values of "community, friendship, orderliness, moderation and justice", this suggests that each is conceived as a structural property, whose operation is governed by proportional equality, to establish relationships between items, or parts, in this "whole". This generates *kosmos*, which Socrates explained earlier is established (for example, in crafts such as speaking, *Grg*. 503e1): "by making one part fit and harmonize with another" (*harmottein*), that musical expression of proportionality.[12] It is this order (*kosmos tis*) which makes things good (506e2–4), whether it is in a house, a ship, a body, a *logos*, or world (T1).

To appreciate the sense in which the five values (*koinonia, philia, kosmiotes, sophrosune, dikaiotes*) are structural properties which bind the item in question into an organised whole, consider each in turn.[13] Just before T1, Socrates applies this framework to an individual agent and to a community, as part of a larger argument against *akolasia*. Socrates argues that only if a soul is ordered can it be lawful (504d), of which the names are *sophrosune* and *dikaiosune*, and only if it is lawful can it enter into *koinonia* and *philia* (507e).[14]

9 See Terence Irwin, *Plato:* Gorgias, *Translated with Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1979), 226: "The mere reference to geometrical equality leaves many unanswered questions".

10 So, "geometry" here cannot be restricted to the plane geometry of *Republic* VII.

11 On which, see Dodds, *Gorgias*, 339–340. Compare Huffman who argues that the term "geometrical equality" is probably not being used by Plato as a technical term; rather, it means "the sort of equality that is studied by geometers" but also the sort of equality that appears in politics in proportional distribution of goods and power. Huffman, *Archytas*, 209.

12 See Euclid's account of equality in *koinai ennoiai*, *Elements* I: "Things fitting to one another (*epharmozonta*) are equal to one another".

13 I opt for "value" rather than "virtue" in the absence of evidence that *koinonia*, *philia* or *kosmiotes* are virtues, strictly speaking, for Plato, though they are evidently conducive to them, as we shall see.

14 Compare Xenophon's *Memorabilia* II 6: those subject to *pleonexia* and overpowered by appetites are incapable of friendship. See *Republic* I 351c: a group of thieves committing

> T2: "Such a person [who is disorderly] could be friend neither to any other human nor to god. He would be incapable of feeling any sense of community, and there can be no friendship (*philia*) for someone who has no sense of community (*koinonia*). (507d–e)

Here, then, the five values are, again, doing "binding" work, now in a community. The *Protagoras* deploys a similar idea, arguing that men were first "scattered in units", but formed communities, with shame and justice "as the principles of organisation of cities and the bonds of friendship" (322c). The *Protagoras* speaks of "shame", where the *Gorgias* has *sophrosune*, but the point is that men and gods will be no more than "scattered units" or distinct parts, unless relationships are established between them to bring them into organisation and unity by these structural values.[15]

This view of *koinonia* as a structural property of a whole conceived of parts can also be seen in the *Republic,* which conceives of the city as a single subject composed of distinct parts whose relationship to one another is conceived in terms of their relationship to other parts, and to the larger whole they comprise together. Unity is achieved by fostering *koinonia* between elements in the city, something which requires the correct relationship between parts and whole. Just as a single person is composed of different elements – body and soul – ordered into a single system (*eis mian suntaxin*), so the city needs to be brought together as a *suntaxis* and a *koinonia*, where ruler and ruled stand in their proper relationships (V 462c9). Given the hierarchical relationship between citizens in the *Republic*, any equality between these parts must involve specifically proportional equality, which Plato explores in the *Laws:* "it [i.e. proportional equality] distributes more to the greater and less to the lesser, apportioning its gifts to the nature of each, greater privileges to those of more

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unjust actions cannot accomplish anything if they wrong one another, because "factions […] are the outcome of injustice, and hatreds and internecine conflicts, but justice brings agreement and friendship (*homonoian kai philian*)". Compare the claim that tyrants cannot have friends, because their companions hate them (VIII 567b–568a, 567d3). *Lysis* (214 ff.) suggests that wrongdoers are unsteady and unbalanced, and when a thing is unlike itself and variable (*anomoion kai diaphoron*) it cannot become like or friend to anything else; inconsistency doesn't lend itself to the favourable attitude.

15 As Christopher Taylor argues, shame is "virtually synonymous with *sophrosune*, when the latter term is used in the sense of that soundness of mind which makes a man accept his proper role in society and pay due regard to the rights of others". *Plato: Protagoras* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 85. See also *Charmides* 160e and note the role that shame plays a role in community building in the *Laws*; on which, see Dan Lyons, "Plato's Attempt to Moralize Shame," *Philosophy* 86, 337 (2011): 353–374.

merit, and to their opposite in merit and education whatever is their due"; this is "true justice" (VI 757a–c).[16]

Philia is also a structural relationship between distinct persons, or parts, which expresses equality. The *Gorgias* argues that there can be no friendship between those who are "much better" or "greatly inferior" (510b–d), i.e. that there cannot be too much difference in status between friends, a thought retained in the *Laws* (VIII 837b).[17] *Philia* obtains between citizens in a *polis* bound together by bonds of friendship (*Resp*. IV 424a2, V 449c5, IX 590c8–d6 and *Laws* I 639b–e, V 743c5–6), such that they can be brought in harmonious relationships, and within the soul itself (*Resp*. IV 442c–443d). A more abstract expression of the binding work of *philia* occurs in the *Timaeus*, where it structures relationships between different elements; the organisation of these parts by geometric proportion so that they cohere into *kosmos* is to the fore (32b8–c4). Both *koinonia* and *philia* are seen, then, and in a variety of contexts, to express structural relationships between distinct parts of some whole, brought into organisation and unity and governed by equality of a kind.

Orderliness (*kosmiotes*), the third value from T1, is also conceived as a relationship between parts organised into a unity. Socrates argues that various items are made better when they have a certain organization (*taxis*, *Grg*.

16 As David Sedley argues: "How Plato might envisage proportional equality at work in his ideal city can be glimpsed, albeit without the mathematics, by comparing the randomly equal distributions characteristic of a democracy, at VIII 558c, with the proportionate principles of distribution assumed at IV 433e–434b." D. Sedley, "Philosophy, the Forms and the Art of Ruling", in *Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic,* ed. G. E. F. Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 271, n. 24. Compare Isocrates, *Areopagiticus* 21ff who recognises two kinds of equality and commends that which does not treat all alike, but gives to each according to his deserts; see also Aristotle, *Pol.* V 1, 1302a6. Thanassis Samaras argues that "Plato there [in the *Republic*] employs geometrical equality in the sense that everyone receives from the state what is appropriate for him or her in correlation with his or her social role and contribution", though he concedes that "the idea of this type of equality exists at the core of the dialogue. Despite this fact, it is [...] left underdeveloped". Samaras, *Plato on Democracy* (New York: Peter Lang, Oxford, 2002), 64. The mathematical disciplines also form a *koinonia* at *Republic* VII 531d. Since appreciation of the "community and kinship" between these subjects contributes to "the desired end", i.e. a grasp of the good, it has been argued by David Sedley that it is specifically grasping "the mathematical principles of proportionality" that emphasizes this community, and contributes to the "desired end", on the understanding that the Good itself is an ideal of proportionality. Sedley, "Philosophy," 270. The *Gorgias* (508a) is taken as a precursor to this idea (Sedley, "Philosophy," 270–1). For the metaphysical significance of *koinonia*, see *Sophist* on the "greatest kinds" (254b, 250b, 256b, 257a).

17 φίλον μέν που καλοῦμεν ὅμοιον ὁμοίῳ κατ᾽ ἀρετὴν καὶ ἴσον ἴσῳ. ("We use the term friend, I take it, to indicate a relationship of a virtuous kind, between like and like, or of an equal with an equal", trans. T. Griffith)

503e6). Examples are crafting a speech, a house, a ship, and even bringing the body and the soul into orderly relationships (503e–504c). These items are conceived as composed of parts brought into an orderly system, where parts "harmonise" with one another (*harmottein*), so that the whole is brought into *kosmos* (504a). Socrates associates craftsmanship with imposing form on the relevant materials to bring order such that the whole can be a functioning unity (503e–504a). Again, attention is drawn to the structural role of this property in the organization of various entities that are complex items, and the importance of each part 'harmonising' with each other (*harmottein*), suggests that proportionality governs its operation.

Of the five values from T1, *sophrosune* and *dikaiosune*, closely associated with orderliness (504d), remain. How *sophrosune* expresses orderliness is first explored on the level of soul: being one's own master, "ruling the pleasures and desires within oneself" (491d). Since it is that state where distinct elements of the soul ("ruler", "pleasures", "desires") are placed in their proper relationships to one another, which is determined by "which of the pleasures are better and worse" (501b7, 503c), i.e. in a way that gives each their due, *how* these parts are "fitted together so that they "harmonise (*harmottein*) with each other", may also instantiate proportionality (see *Laws* VI 757b on the relationship between proportional equality and "true justice"). *Dikaiosune* is likewise described in terms of a harmonious ordering of soul (*Grg*. 504d), and its application to the community again suggests that proportionality governs its operation: when distributing shares at a feast, justice does not obtain, as Callicles supposes, when the ruler takes more than their share, but when they have more than some and less than others and shares are distributed in accordance with what is best (490c6).[18] In other words, the *Gorgias* suggests the view, developed in more detail in the *Republic*, that *sophrosune* and *dikaiosune* are structural properties, associated with order and harmony, and governed by proportionality.[19]

18 Distributing shares at a "feast" was an image for *koinonia*, on which see Plutarch's *Quaestiones Convivales* 2,10 with James Warren: "the communal dinner is no mere analogue for the desired harmonious *koinonia* of the city". J. Warren, "Community and Solidarity in Plato's Republic and Stoicism" (unpublished): 3. Warren also argues that: "Plutarch may also have been thinking of Plato *Gorgias* 490b1–d1 where Socrates begins to interrogate Callicles' preference for *pleonexia* by wondering whether food and drink ought to be distributed among a group of people '*en koinoi*' so that the wiser and stronger people have more and the more foolish and weaker have less. But the verbal reminiscences point more strongly towards the *Republic*." Ibid. 5, n. 5.

19 See Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, 300: "When *kosmos* is here related to crafts which produce their results by 'making one part fit and harmonize with another', and to *taxis*, whose meaning is more closely restricted to orderly arrangement, it does seem here that we have an earlier adumbration of the doctrine, developed at length in the *Republic*,

The *Republic* aligns these to *philia* and *taxis*, thus showing a similar interplay of four of the five values of T1: the just man will be temperate "by reason of the friendship and concord" (IV 442c9) between parts of his soul, "having first attained to self-mastery and beautiful order and having become friend with himself" (IV 443d4–5).[20]

The omission of wisdom from this value system is puzzling.[21] If the five values are structural properties, though, perhaps wisdom is absent because it is not so conceived (see *Resp.* IV 430e where *sophrosune* is said to be more like a sort of concord and attunement than wisdom and courage; see IV 431e). Structural values are to the fore because of Socrates' pervasive concern here with the nature of wholes, which are replete with internal relationships that function better when their elements are "bound together" into *kosmos*, or harmony.[22] "It is some order (*kosmos tis*) – the proper order for each of the things that are – which makes things good by coming to be present in it" (*Grg.* 506e2–4). Why this concern is pertinent in a dialogue about *speech* becomes clear once we appreciate that crafting a *logos* involves composing "the whole into a thing of order and system" (504a), and this crafting is directed towards *persons*, each of whom are subjects composed of distinct elements which may be in a state of order and harmony or not (504b5, 482b–c). Further, in order for the ideal speaker to achieve this aim (504d–e), appropriate relationships must also obtain *between* speakers, as we shall see. Given the various relationships involved in *legein*, I submit, priority is given to structural values that govern those relationships.

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that the soul is a complex, and righteousness consists in a harmonious order and working together of its parts". For *sophrosune* and *dikaiosune* as kinds of attunement, see *sophrosune* at III 412a; see also IV 441e–442a; *dikaiosune* at IV 443d–e, VII 522a.

20 Since the individual body-soul compound was likened to a *koinonia*, "organised by the soul" in *Resp.* V 462c–d, perhaps the fifth value from T1 is suggested.

21 David Sedley argues that wisdom "forms no part of the value system that Socrates constructs in the *Gorgias*". Sedley, "Myth, Punishment and Politics in the *Gorgias*," in *Plato's Myths*, ed. C. Partenie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 5. John M. Cooper notes this omission, but argues that "wisdom is plainly implied as the origin of *sophrosune* in any soul". Cooper, "Socrates and Plato in Plato's *Gorgias*," in *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory*, ed. J. M. Cooper (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 68, n. 59.

22 Verity Harte, *Plato on Parts and Wholes: The Metaphysics of Structure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) argues that this structural view of composition is central to Plato's view of wholes. Compare Raphael Woolf who argues that "we have here a quite general theory of what it is for something to be good, and that is for that thing to have a harmonious and well-ordered structure", though he does not make much of T1. Woolf, "Callicles and Socrates," 12.

Nonetheless, the concluding thought of T1, which unifies all five values under wisdom of a kind, places the workings of intelligence on the agenda. Socrates earlier made reference to a "practice" (*melete*) concerned with goodness (500d8), and goodness is associated with bringing disparate parts into a functioning unity (504a), precisely that binding work of the five values (507e–508a).[23] When T1 specifies that "practice" as geometry (508a), this suggests that the discernment of proportionality, mathematically expressed, is at the heart of that wisdom which enables those structural properties to do their "binding" work. As the *Timaeus* puts it: "Of all bonds the best is that which makes itself and the terms it connects a unity in the fullest sense; and it is the nature of proportion to effect this most perfectly" (31c).[24] Unity seems to have a rational basis in the proportions of consonance, with geometry as its practice. Just as elsewhere in Plato, mathematics is the language of value.[25]

Given that appreciation of the binding work of these five structural values is placed under the single practice of geometry, it is not clear how the five values are distinct; this is the "structural" equivalent of the question regarding the unity of the virtues in light of their relation to knowledge (where "structure" here takes the place of "knowledge"). While there is no obvious reason why two agents or items cannot simultaneously stand to each other in the relation of, say, justice and friendship, it seems impossible for them to stand simultaneously in two distinct geometrical relations. Socrates also mentions courage (507b) and claims that it, too, is dependent on structure: the same *kosmos* in the soul which is responsible for temperance is also manifested in Callicles' prized courage. This suggests that *all* the virtues (even piety, 507b) manifest the same geometrical relation; for if all Socrates means to say is that both temperance and courage are structural relations in the soul, without insisting that they are the same structure, then it would be possible to claim that they are two

23 Compare the account of intelligence, or *nous* as "the truly good and binding" responsible for order in Socrates' autobiography in the *Phaedo;* see also *Philebus* 28d5–29a4.

24 This may specify wisdom too narrowly for some, but see David Sedley on the importance of grasping "the mathematical principles of proportionality" in the educational program of the *Republic* and its exercise by the craftsman in the *Timaeus*. Sedley, "Philosophy," 270 and 270, n. 24.

25 Compare Justin Gosling on the *Republic*: "the whole trend is to assimilate value concepts to mathematical ones of measure and proportion". Gosling, *Plato: The Arguments of the Philosophers* (London–New York: Routledge, 1973), 103. See Myles Burnyeat: "The content of mathematics is a constitutive part of ethical understanding". Burnyeat, "Plato on Why Mathematics is Good for the Soul," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 103 (2000): 6. Sedley argues that goodness is ideal proportionality and this is expressible in mathematical terms. "Philosophy," 270.

incompatible structures, and one must choose between being courageous and being temperate. This is not what Socrates wants to achieve with Callicles.[26]

Though some ideas compressed in T1 find fruition in the *Timaeus*, the passage is part of a dialectical encounter with Callicles, whose patience with such theorizing one suspects to be minimal.[27] The beauty of this passage is that despite looking forward to ideas that find fuller expression in other Platonic works, it reworks ideas that Callicles put on the agenda. The dialectical force of the addition of *koinonia* and *philia* (507e) to the other values that have loomed large thus far is that these are values to which Callicles has shown the most affinity: he is part of a *koinonia* with a group of friends with whom he discusses philosophy (487c2). The laws and conventions of the city (484d) and affairs of human beings more broadly (d5–6) matter to Callicles, as does helping friends (*philoi*, 483b4, 486b); part of his defence of lawlessness is that the strong man can give gifts to friends (492c2–3).[28] Socrates already appealed to Callicles' commitment to friendship and community in their first exchange, where instead of a private (*idion*) experience, he makes reference to a shared *pathos* (481c); the parallel with the community (*koinonia*) of pleasures and pains in

26 The psychology of the *Republic* provides support here insofar as it seems that there is only *one* proper structural relation between the soul's parts, and yet *all* the virtues are in place. I thank Naly Thaler for comments on this paragraph.

27 Note the following parallels with the *Timaeus*. First, the study of the natural world provides objective grounds for ethical values. As Thomas Kjeller Johansen argues: "It is a tenet of Plato's thought that man is not alone in the universe with his moral concerns. Goodness is represented in the universe. We can therefore learn something about goodness by studying the cosmos. Cosmology teaches us how to lead our lives". Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1. In the *Timaeus*, the world is an object of worship (*Tim.* 27c–d), which human beings strive to emulate; on which, see Sarah Broadie, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's Timaeus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 173–174. Second, one of the ways in which we appreciate the order of the world is by appreciating the proportionality that brings the different elements of the universe into friendship: "… these four particular constituents [i.e. earth, water, air, and fire] were used to beget the body of the world, coming into agreement through proportion (*di'analogias homologesan*). They bestowed friendship (*philia*) upon it, so that, having come together into a unity with itself, it could not be undone by anyone but the one who had bound it together" (*Tim.* 32b8–c4). There is a geometrical bond in the body of the universe, which establishes an equal and harmonious relation between the elements such that they will "all of necessity turn out to have the same relationship to each other" and will "all be unified (*hen*)" despite their difference. Third, the Demiurge was able to fulfil his plan of intelligent ordering (*apotelei*, *Tim.* 56c6) and bestow the order, which the *Gorgias* describes as characteristic of craftsmanship (504 ff.), by introducing "as much proportionality into them and in as many ways" (*Tim.* 69b2–5).

28 Noted by Roger Duncan, "*Philia* in the *Gorgias*," *Apeiron* 8, 1 (1974): 23 and Woolf, "Callicles and Socrates," 6, 10.

the *Republic* will not go unnoticed (462b4). References to friendship are rife (*Grg.* 485e, 486a, 487b8–d9, 487e; 513c4–d1), hence the force of the claim that the unjust life is an endless evil which leaves a man friendless (507e) and the bite of the later argument for maximal protection from injustice which revolves around the nature and role of friendship (510c ff.). The Calliclean claim that we should live according to nature is countered in T1 by a view of nature as an ordered whole, so that *phusis* and *nomos* are no longer opposed (482e5–6). Studying this world-order, it is suggested, provides objective grounds for the views for which Socrates has argued previously, just as Callicles had appealed to nature to ground his ethical claims.[29] The mention of *kosmos* in T1 need cause no dialectical alarm due to its apparent Pythagorean resonances either, for by the fifth century "the wide application of *kosmos* was generally known and used".[30] Guthrie cites the fact that "*kosmos* figures prominently at the start of Gorgias' own *Helen* (DK II, 288), where it is said to be represented by manly virtue in a city, beauty in a body, wisdom in a soul, and truth in speech, thus coming very close to Plato's description here of *kosmos* in body and soul". Since Gorgias is a guest in Callicles' house, he may well be familiar with Gorgianic expressions of *kosmos* in terms that appeal to the values of manly virtue he prizes in this work. Finally, Callicles had earlier chastised Socrates for failing to practise what he should (*ameleis … on dei se epimeleisthai*, 485e8–9), mirrored here by Socrates' *geometrias gar ameleis*, 508a7). And equality (*isotes*) featured in Callicles' conception of the good life; he rejected the idea that those who are by nature the best (*beltistous*) must adhere to the division of equal shares (*to ison chre echein*, 484a1). In light of this, even Socrates' privileging of "geometrical equality", which, in a political context, means that the "the best" get more than those less deserving, could perhaps receive Calliclean formulation. Socrates captures his world-view by foregrounding two values cherished by Callicles, shows that their basis exposes a deep affinity to the values of justice, moderation, and order, to which Callicles sets himself at odds, and reworks concepts with which Callicles is familiar to establish common ground (*koinonia*) between them. The passage is a dialectical triumph: Socrates manages to engage both Callicles *and* the later Plato.[31]

29 As Duncan argues: "In going on to assign a cosmic role for *philia*, Socrates relates the spectacle of the divided Callicles to the nature/convention dichotomy, so crucial to Callicles' world picture. *Philia*, Socrates tells us, is natural". "*Philia*," 23–4.

30 W. K. C. Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 300.

31 That Socrates *does* engage Callicles successfully is clear from their most productive exchange that follows (509c ff.); on which, see Malcolm Schofield, "Callicles' return: *Gorgias* 509–522 reconsidered," *Philosophie Antique* 17 (2017): 7–30.

3 Harmony in Soul

The preceding section explored the normative framework of T1 and argued that the five values are conceived as structural properties, which bring an item into organisation by a proportionate relationship between their parts. Along with the world in T1, and the human community in T2, the soul is taken to be another "whole" composed of distinct aspects, or "parts", which requires "orderliness", "moderation", and "justice" to foster harmony and *kosmos*. Consider the following:

> T3: I think it is better that my instrument should be discordant and out of tune, along with any chorus I may be responsible for putting on the stage – and that the greatest part of mankind should disagree with me and contradict me, than that I *being one* (*hena onta*), should be out of harmony with myself and contradict myself. (*Grg.* 482b–c)

Socrates claims that he is one (*hena onta*), and yet also a plural subject composed of distinct elements, like a lyre or a chorus, which may harmonise or not.[32] From this consideration a normative claim is generated: since these diverse elements exist in one whole, they *ought* to be brought into harmony. This is an *a fortiori* argument; being out of tune with one's fellow chorus members or playing an out of tune instrument are obviously bad. It is surely worse to be out-of-tune with oneself. If you are completely out of tune with yourself, it might even become a question whether you are one; there might be a point when a chorus stops functioning as a chorus if each individual is singing a different song, or in a different key.

Why this is better is explained by the thought that in *anything*, its distinctive virtue comes to be present by some structure (*taxis*) and order (*kosmos*), which "makes thing good by coming to be present in it" (506e2–4). Though the context for T3 emphasizes harmony, or consistency of distinct *beliefs* (Callicles' inconsistent beliefs prompted this reflection), a richer account of psychic harmony is suggested by the relationship between psychic harmony and *sophrosune* at 504a ff., with the account of *sophrosune* as the ordering of pleasures and desires (491d10–e1, "ruling over oneself", *heautou archonta*). By this point, the account of harmony includes the symphonic work of three values of T1 ("orderliness", "moderation" and "justice"), and governs pleasures and desires,

32 The notion of the soul as a lyre in harmony may recall Pythagorean themes explored earlier (n.8), particularly those of Philolaus, as well as the intertwining of soul-*harmonia*-lyre in Simmias' objection in the *Phaedo.* I thank Gábor Betegh for this point.

no less than beliefs in the soul.[33] Establishing this *kosmos* is the aim of the ideal speaker, who tries to bring about orderly desiderative states, of which the names are *sophrosune* and *dikaiosune* (504d), alongside fostering two further values from T1, *koinonia* and *philia*, as we shall see. World (T1), community (T2), and soul (T3), then, are part of one and the same normative framework.

4 *Kosmos* in Dialogue

The application of this framework to speech shows that it is not a value-neutral practice. Speech composed at random is contrasted with the skill of a craftsman who works with a view to the purpose of his craft (503d–504a), ensuring that each part of what he makes is appropriate (*prepon*) and fitting (*harmottein*) to every other part, to establish order (*taxis*) and arrangement (*kosmos*). Consider, for example, where Socrates puts a head on the argument (505d1), without which the argument will be incomplete (μὴ γάρ τοι ἀτελῆ γε τὸν λόγον καταλίπωμεν, 505d6). By referring to a part of the *logos* as "a head" in the *Gorgias*, Socrates shows his focus on the larger whole – the "body" – of which this head is a part, which he desires, like other craftsmen, to bring to completion by fitting its parts together.[34] This image of a *logos* as a living body composed of parts resurfaces in the *Phaedrus*, which shows a similar concern with compositional unity.[35]

33 This need not require the view that there is an explicit division of the soul into parts in the *Gorgias* (though for suggestive references to psychic complexity, see 493a1–b3 and 496e6–8); all it requires is, at least, the thought that there are distinct beliefs in an agent's soul which need to be "harmonised" (481b–482c), and "pleasures" and "desires" which require governance by "reason" (491d10–e1). How these pleasures and desires are conceived, and what relationship they have to reason is a further question, on which see Gabriella Roxanne Carone, "Calculating Machines or Leaky Jars: The Moral Psychology of Plato's *Gorgias*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 26 (2004).

34 Compare the concern that the argument will be unfinished with the workings of that master craftsman from the *Timaeus* who was able to fulfil his plan of intelligent ordering (*apotelei*, 56c6). See *Republic* VII 530e where philosophers must guard against any study that lacks purpose or completion (*ateles*).

35 Richard Hunter calls Plato "the first surviving theorist of literary unity": "Plato's analogy of a written work to a living creature, composed of individual parts of which each has its own function, but which also contribute to a single whole, may go back to sophistic discussion in the 5th century BCE (see Gorgias, *Helen* 18), and it develops Presocratic and medical ideas about the relation between health and a balanced mixture of diverse elements. It is this analogy that helps to explain the important links between ordering, appropriateness, and 'unity', links which give the pursuit of unity an ethical function, as

> T4: Every *logos* must be organised like a living being, with a body of its own, as it were, so as not to be headless or footless, but to have a middle and members composed in fitting relation to each other and to the whole. (*Phdr*. 264c)[36]

The different elements of a *logos* constitute a unity if they are organised in relation to each other and to the larger whole of which they are parts. Conceived as such, *legein* is a *relational* practice, and it is the relationships involved in the operations of *logos* that are governed by the structural values of T1. These relationships take a variety of related forms: the *logos* you *legein* itself needs to be appropriately structured, where this is a matter of its internal content or form: "Each [craftsman] looks to his own particular job … with the intention that the object he is making shall have a certain form … Each one positions each thing he positions in some structure, until he has composed the whole into a thing of order and system" (503e–504a), where this "object" naturally refers to the structure of a *logos*. But then Socrates turns to those experts such as doctors, to argue that they order and attune the body (504a), just as the ideal speaker orders *the soul* (504d–e). So, the structuring involved in *legein* is both an internal matter (of the relationship between "hands", "head" and "feet" in one's *logos*) and also concerns the intrapersonal, or internal, relationships within an interlocutor's soul, towards which the ideal speaker aims (504d–e). Further, in order to foster harmony in an interlocutor's soul (an ideal speaker's aim, 504d–e), a speaker must also foster appropriate relationships *between* speakers, as we shall see. There is something intuitively plausible about this: for if harmony of soul requires consistent beliefs (482b–c, T3), then a *logos* must be structured in such a way that consistency in an interlocutor's doxastic set can be appropriately tested, and for this to obtain the participants must be appropriately related *to each other* such that they are capable of participating in this enterprise; they must be capable of engaging in the shared, reciprocal, task of question and answer (hence the importance of *koinonia* and *philia*), following the proper "order" of discussion, and proceeding "justly" and "moderately" in argument.

Consider how the five values from T1 are exemplified in discussion. This takes a distinctive form; *dialegesthai* is contrasted with *epideixis* (447c1–3), conceived

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well as a simply artistic one." *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edition, under "Poetic Unity", eds. S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

36 πάντα λόγον ὥσπερ ζῷον συνεστάναι σῶμά τι ἔχοντα αὐτὸν αὑτοῦ, ὥστε μήτε ἀκέφαλον εἶναι μήτε ἄπουν, ἀλλὰ μέσα τε ἔχειν καὶ ἄκρα, πρέποντα ἀλλήλοις καὶ τῷ ὅλῳ γεγραμμένα.

Compare the statue image in the *Republic* IV 420c–d where there is a similar emphasis on the painter's ability to perceive overall unity, i.e. how the parts of his creation are arranged within a whole.

as “asking and answering questions” (449b–c), later glossed as “refuting and being refuted” (462a4–5 with 447d14–5). Characterised as such, dialogue is a joint endeavour, constituted by two or more parties, who share or exchange views, to determine whether these are consistent. Socrates is emphatic that dialogue is a communal endeavour (495a8–9) with participants who search “in common [with me]” (*koine met’emou*, 498e10), towards a common good (*koinon agathon*, 505e4–6, 502e6–7): truth (453b, 457e–458b). The dialogue ends with an appeal to *koinonia*: Socrates urges Callicles to practice together with him and with others, too (527d2–e5, *koine askesantes*). This deployment of *koinein* and cognate terms (495a8–9, 498e10, 505e4–6, 527d2, see also 502e6–7) suggests first that dialogue requires a sense of community. Whilst it is possible to engage in question and answer alone, or to “perform” this speech act in the presence of others, as Socrates does here (506c–d), its primary *modus operandi* is collaborative; it has a “public character”, where each is held to account in discussion by another.[37] For this to work, participants must be engaged for common purpose in pursuit of a common good (*koinon agathon*, 505e4–6, 502e6–7). This provides a mutually accepted direction which shapes the refutational practice so that questions are not purely rhetorical, as if one party is beginning a speech (466b1, 466c3–5), nor are they employed to secure a private (*idion*) good, such as argumentative victory; they are employed for the business of holding each other to account if what is stated “isn’t true” (487e, 506a).

This communal enterprise is constituted by sharing, as each takes turns “asking and answering questions” (449b–c, 461a2). This requires equality in the distribution of discursive shares: no-one should take more than their share in discussion, as Polus is inclined to do (461d8–9); hence the fondness for *brachulogia*, attention to which is drawn repeatedly (449a1, 449b8, 449c1, 449c5, 449c7, 461d6, 462a4–5, 505e4–6). Though the distribution of the *logos* involves the division of equal shares, this is not governed by strict arithmetical equality; sometimes it is not just permitted, but required, to extend oneself into a *makros logos*, as Gorgias first suggests (449b9–c3) and Socrates endorses and demonstrates (465e1–6). If one of the parties does not understand and cannot make “use” of the answer (465e5), then a further share of the *logos* may be taken to explain; answers must be given their discursive due which is determined by the degree of use that can be made of them. This distribution of *logos* manifests proportional equality, elsewhere characterised as “true justice”

37 I take the phrase from Michael Frede who argues that the public character of dialogue enables a degree of rationality “which is not guaranteed when the soul is left to discourse with itself”. M. Frede, “Plato’s Arguments and the Dialogue Form,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Supplementary volume (1992): 218.

(*Leg.* VI 757a–c), which may explain why such a procedure is characterised as "just" ("it is *dikaion*", *Grg*. 466a2). This is how *koinonia*, as we might expect from T1, is underpinned by proportionality in its discursive expression, no less than in common endeavours at large.[38]

The importance of sharing, equality – and reciprocity both in the back and forth of question and answer and in taking turns as questioner and answerer (462a3–5) – explains a second characteristic of Socratic discussion, indicated by the prevalence of *philein* and cognate terms in discussion; for these are its key characteristics. Socrates professes friendship with all three interlocutors and frequently addresses them as friends (Polus: 465d, 466c7, 466d, 471a3, 473a3, 479d7; Gorgias: 487b1; Callicles: 500b6, 507a3, 519e3; see also 485e, 486a where Callicles professes friendship for Socrates). Dialogical relations, unlike Gorgianic rhetoric, are relations without domination, and friendship is the recognition each gives to the other as an equal, such that one will engage in reciprocal sharing.[39] The dialogical relationship manifests the equality characteristic of friendship insofar as each takes their turn "asking and answering questions", each is heard equally, and no less important, the worth and value of each participant, along with their proposals, is acknowledged.[40] To treat someone as an inferior is to refuse to take them seriously, which inhibits *philia* (510c), no less than dialogue. Consider how friendship is invoked to establish equality when this is threatened. Polus sniggers at Socrates' proposals, claiming that even a child could prove him wrong (470c5–6); Socrates resists by invoking friendship: "I should be most grateful to the child and equally to you, if you prove me wrong and rid me of some piece of nonsense. You are doing a favour to a friend (*philon*), so stick at it – prove me wrong." (470c7–8). Callicles accuses Socrates of joking (481b6–7, 482c4) and treats him like a child; he does not take the argument seriously and shifts his ground, attempting to deceive him (499c2). This is something that Socrates did not expect, *because he thought he was a friend* (499c3–4). Further, when Socrates urges Callicles "in the name

38 This helps to deal with the objection that Socrates himself sometimes delivers long speeches (e.g. the pastry-baking analogy at 464b–465d, the critique of Themistocles and Pericles at 517b–519d, and the myth at the end of the dialogue at 523a–527c); insofar as a long speech promotes understanding, it is permissible (465e4–466a2). See Tushar Irani's paper in this volume, especially pages 90–91.

39 That equality is a factor in the *Gorgias*' conception of friendship can be seen at 510c ff. The maxim "Equality is friendship" is referred to in the *Laws* VI 757a6; Aristotle reports the saying that "friendship is equality" in *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII 8, 1168b8.

40 Socrates encourages interlocutors to refute him (Polus: 467a8–b2, 469c8, 473b7; Callicles 482b2, 506c1–3, 508a8–b3 and 505e4–506a7); he does not subject others to anything he is not prepared to undergo himself.

of friendship" to answer, this is a request to treat him as an equal partner and not reduce proposals to a joke (500b6).

Acknowledging the other as an equal is required to see them as worthy of reciprocation, which in this context means making a discursive return. When Socrates urges Callicles, for the second time to answer "in the name of friendship" this seems to refer to discharging the reciprocal obligations characteristic of friendship (519e3). Such reciprocity is how one shows the care and active support and assistance characteristic of friendship, something to which both Callicles (483b, 486b) and Socrates (487a–b, 508c, 509b) appeal.[41] Socrates associates this care with telling each other the truth (487a–b), which will sometimes be shown by asking questions to test the proposal, as Socrates puts it to Polus (and later to Callicles, 506c1–3): you are doing a favour to a friend, "prove me wrong, and rid me of some piece of nonsense".[42] The goodwill (*eunoia*) of the discussants towards one another (487a–b) is what disposes them to receive it as such.[43] Whether a speaker is acknowledged as an equal partner, towards whom one will reciprocate, relies on some degree of similarity and agreement between discussants, another hallmark of *philia* (510b–d).[44] If there is not at least a similar orientation in the discussion, and agreement about the fundamental terms of their co-operation, then where there is disagreement, or refutation, the parties will "lose their tempers, and think the other is speaking out of malice, trying to win an argument rather than investigating the subject put forward for discussion" (457c–e). This dissolves communication, the opposite of that binding work of *philia*.

The third value from T1, "orderliness" (*kosmiotes*), is clear throughout. Remarks on method punctuate exchanges with all three speakers (Gorgias: 457c4–458e2; Polus: 471d3–472d1; Callicles: 486d2–488b). From the start, Socrates is emphatic that the argument must be completed "in an orderly way" (454c1–2 with Gorgias), and questions are put "in the right order" (463c3–6

41 Callicles associates *philia* with care (*kedesthai*) at 483b4 and 487a6–b1; Socrates associates *philia* with care (*kedesthai*) for that of which one is *philon* at 487a–b. See *Resp.* III 412d2–7.

42 Compare the *Apology* where Socrates acts towards citizens as *philoi* (31b4) and confers upon each citizen individually what he regards as the greatest benefit (36c3–4), being a refutational gadfly.

43 Compare *Laws* IV 722e–723a: "It seems clear to me that the reason why the legislator gave that entire persuasive speech was to make the person to whom he promulgates his law accept his command in a well-disposed frame of mind (*eumenos*) and with a corresponding readiness to learn (*eumathesteron*)".

44 Equality implies similarity and belongs to the same semantic field, see *Laws* VIII 836e5–837d8 (*isos te kai homoios*). Aristotle argues that friendship is a type of equality and likeness, and *philoi* need to be alike because this enables reciprocity between them (*Eth. Nic.* VIII 13, 1162b–1163a).

with Polus; 494e3 with Callicles). This at the very least involves consideration of what something *is*, before discussing what that thing *is like* (463c6); it is not *dikaion* to invert this order (463c6), e.g. to discuss whether rhetoric is a fine thing before discovering what kind of subdivision of sycophancy it is. The participants resist: despite the fact that Socrates has yet to say anything clear, "our colt here [Polus] is young and eager to be off" (463e1–3). Callicles becomes exasperated with Socrates' "finicky little questions" (497c1–2) and wants to be inducted into the greater mysteries before the lower (497c3–4); initiation into the mysteries was a highly regulated procedure. This order gives a determinate shape and *form* to the discussion, as is characteristic of a craftsman of *logos* (503e–504a): answering the *ti esti* question (462b6, 462c10–d2, 463c3–5), i.e. providing a true account of the nature of things (453b, 458a–b) by "defining the things they are trying to discuss" (457c–e), which is rhetoric (463c6). The search for definition organises the discussion and provides the directionality needed to give it a determinate shape and form. The use of *logos* for victory in argument (457d–e, 505e4–5, 515b), by contrast, need make no use of this shape and structure.

Here, too, proportionality is in operation. When Socrates addresses the *ti esti* question first, he says he will not embark on a *makros logos*, but speak as the geometers do (*hoi geometroi*, 465b–c), introducing the following proportionalities: "as fashion is to training, so the skill of the sophist is to the science of the legislator, and as cookery is to medicine, so rhetoric is to justice" (465c1–3). These proportionalities introduce a structure of classifications which establish relationships between relevant "skills" to assist the definitional task.[45] In a concluding remark, Socrates claims that the language of geometrical proportion is *phusei* (465c4), but orators and sophists get mixed up and fail to make relevant distinctions: everything becomes like Anaxagoras's description of the original state of things before the world was created where "all things were together"

45 Aristotle comments on the use of proportion in developing definitions (*Top.* I 17, 108a7), where the ability to recognize likeness in things of different genera is central. "Windlessness" and "calm-on-the-ocean" are recognized as alike, and this likeness is expressed in the following proportion: as *nenemia* is to the air so *galene* is to the sea. The use of proportionality in definitions is something with possible Archytean precedent, on which see Huffman, *Archytas*, who argues that this would explain a reference to Archytas at *Rhetoric* III 11, 1412a9–17, where Archytas is praised for his ability to see similarity in things which differ. The definitions of an altar and an arbitrator appeal to their common functions as a refuge, while recognizing the different context and way in which this function is carried out. For doubts about this reconstruction of Archytas' theory, see Malcolm Schofield, "Archytas," in *A History of Pythagoreanism*, ed. C. A. Huffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 80.

(DK 59 B 1). In other words, Socrates likens this confusion in *logos* to the confusion in the world before the *kosmos* of T1 (see *Phd.* 97c–98a) and by implication suggests that he is engaged in the task of establishing *kosmos* in *logos* by the application of geometrical proportion.[46]

This ordering of *logos* reveals its "use" (*chreia*). Just as a shoemaker works with materials and imposes form so that the function of a shoe is realised, so the speaker imposes form on the discussion so that *its* use or function can be realised.[47] This is specified as follows: "The good man who speaks with a view to the best (*to beltiston*), surely he won't speak at random, but will look to something (*pros ti*). He will be like all other craftsmen" (*Grg*. 503d–e). "As he applies to souls the words he speaks", the good speaker will "always have his mind on this (*pros touto*); to see that the souls of the citizens acquire justice and get rid of injustice, and that they acquire temperance and get rid of intemperance and that they acquire the rest of virtue and get rid of vice" (504e, 503b–d, 515a–c, 516e–517a). If the form of a *logos* is its shape and structure (given by the definitional enterprise), the *pros ti* is the establishment of structural relations (e.g. justice and moderation) within the listener's soul. The speaker has in mind *both* healthy relationships between different parts of the *logos* to maintain dialogical structure, and healthy internal relationships in the interlocutor's *soul* (to establish the *pros ti*). The aim for the craftsman of *logos* is ultimately the crafting of souls in accordance with the model in T3.[48]

Like the model craftsman, Socrates brings about order by "[compelling] one thing to be appropriate and harmonise with another", one expression of which in *logos* is agreement, or consistency, between ideas.[49] Socrates is attuned to whether things said by the speakers harmonise (*sumphonein*) with what was said previously (457e2, 461a2, with Gorgias; 480b4 with Polus; 482b–c with

46 See T. K. Johansen on how proportionality operates in the *logos* of the *Timaeus*, to imitate cosmic proportionality: "A proportionate account of the cosmos itself instantiates the order and relative importance of the parts of the cosmos". More specifically, "proportionality of speech is expressed both in the relative size of the parts of the speech and in the order in which they come". Johansen, *Plato's Natural Philosophy*, 190–192.

47 Since form is that principle which organises parts into a functioning whole, so that its distinctive good can be realised (506d–e), this suggests that the imposition of form is associated with that arrangement that allows it to be a *good* object of its kind. This is not a conception of *eidos* in the sense of how something looks, then, but is concerned with functionality; to work out something's form one needs to know what it is *for*. One need not be a philosopher to do this; see the ideal "user" in *Republic* X.

48 For Socrates' aim as the improvement of souls, see 475d5–e1, 522b2–c2.

49 The logical relationship suggested by "harmony" is debated, on which see Dominic Bailey, "Logic and Music in Plato's *Phaedo*," *Phronesis* 50, 2 (2005). Compare *Philebus* 23c–27b on the harmonic nature of dialectical inquiry.

Callicles; 482c with himself; see also 461c). This generates discursive norms: keeping to your word (449b7), not constantly shifting your position (499c2) and a good memory (488b6, 495d3, 499e7, 500a7–8); only if things are maintained can one bring them into harmony with things said later. Socrates does not just examine whether individual statements are coherent (e.g. whether pleasure and the good are the same); he is concerned to formulate these in a systematic and methodical way, such that they can be organised into both the larger dialogical whole of which they are a part (determining the nature of rhetoric), and the larger doxastic framework of the speaker. This is why completeness is crucial (505d6); one cannot fit elements together (*harmottein*) into a whole without completion.

Notice that Socrates is concerned not only to bring about order and harmony by ensuring that interlocutors stand in their appropriate relationships with one another; he is also concerned with how participants are related *to their own selves*, i.e. to their own desires and interests. This becomes important when appreciating how this craftsman of *logos* fosters not only harmonic *logoi* (482b–c), but also orderly desiderative states, that is, ruling over pleasures and desires (491d). To appreciate this, consider how the two remaining values from T1, *dikaiosune* and *sophrosune*, which the speaker aims to establish in soul, are exemplified discursively. When Socrates attends to Gorgias' account of rhetoric, for example, he checks that he has understood before checking whether it "harmonizes" with things said before; Gorgias confirms: "Your belief is correct and your supposition *just*" (*dikaios*, 451a). Socrates' work as questioner is to scrutinise proposals; Gorgias' work is to answer, but each cannot do the work assigned to them if they "[snatch] at one another's meaning on the basis of guesswork" (454c1–5). The questioner must attend to "what they really mean" when they offer a proposal (450c3–4, 451d9–e1, 453b5–7 with Gorgias; 462c–466a with Polus; 488b2–d3, 489d1–4, 508c3–5, 515b6–8 with Callicles), because it may be the case that "your answer is correct and I don't understand your meaning" (458e3–6). This underpins the importance of *brachulogia* (449a1, b8, c1, c5, c7, 461d6, 462a4–5, 505e4–6), which allows the questioner to "scrutinize more clearly" and enables a "*just* reckoning" (*dikaion logon*, 504e).[50] Consider a third invocation of justice, after the refutation of Gorgias. When the argument has been made explicit and a contradiction exposed, Polus objects and is invited to "put them straight", which means "if anything has been agreed which was wrongly agreed, [he should] take back whatever [he] want[s] to

50 See *Prot.* 329a–b, 334c–338e, esp. 335b on *brachulogia* as "διαλέγεσθαι ὡς ἐγὼ δύναμαι ἕπεσθαι" with "in order to scrutinize more clearly" (352a); see *Charm.* 166d; *Hip. Min.* 364b–c; *Resp.* I 348a–b; *Soph.* 217c–218a.

take back", as long as *makrologia* is held in check; this is "just" (*dikaios*, 461d2). If Polus thinks that Gorgias has not done his proper work in the discussion, he should "take back" whatever Gorgias should not have agreed to – as long as he sticks to his proper work as answerer and does not engage in *makrologia.* This is a discursive expression of *pleonexia* (taking more than one's share), where the participants are not doing the work proper to them – "answering" and interfering with the work of another qua questioner by going on for too long. (At the other extreme, Callicles refuses to do the work assigned to him by refusing to answer *at all* at one point, 504c4.)

Justice in *logos* is important if the rhetorical craftsman is to "look to his own particular job" (503e2): orderly relationships in the listener's soul (504e). Here the *Theaetetus*, which also tethers discussion to virtue, is instructive:

> T5: Do not be unjust in your questions. It is the height of unreasonableness that a person who professes to care for moral goodness should be consistently unjust in discussion. I mean by injustice, in this connection, the behaviour of a man who does not take care to keep controversy (*diatribas poiein*) distinct from discussion (*dialegesthai*); a man who forgets that in controversy he may play about and trip up his opponents as often as he can, but that in discussion he must be serious, he must keep on helping his opponent to his feet again, and point out to him only those slips which are due to himself or to the intellectual society which he has previously frequented. If you observe this distinction, those who associate with you will blame themselves for their confusion and difficulties, not you. They will seek your company and think of you as their friend; but they will loathe themselves, and seek refuge from themselves in philosophy, in the hope that they might thereby become different people and be rid for ever of the men that they once were. (*Tht.* 167e1–168a6)[51]

If discussion aims at virtue, it must enable the interlocutor to realise errors as their own, rather than blaming the questioner. Hence the value of explicit argumentation, which determines whether the participants agree to each step, and allows them to retract statements, so that when a contradiction is exposed they take responsibility for it, rather than seeing themselves as "tied up" and "muzzled" (as Polus does, *Grg.* 482e1–2) by the "bullying" questioner (505d4–5: Callicles). This "just" procedure also generates discursive norms *for the interlocutor,* too: each must say what they really think and not just what most people

51 Translation by M. J. Levett (revised by Myles Burnyeat).

might say (489a, 492d, 494c, 508a–c). They must treat the discussion seriously, something both Polus (470c4–5, 471d4, 473e3–5) and Callicles fail to do at certain points (481b6–7, 482c4, 499b6, 500b6). Adhering to these norms shows commitment and investment, which ensures that the interlocutor experiences the discomfort of disharmony when they say contradictory things (*Grg.* 495a; *Prot.* 331c); this is a necessary first step towards serving the *pros ti*. The interlocutor must be bound to their *logos* and *see* that they are so bound.

This refutational activity is cast as a form of beneficial punishment (508b5–7, 480a–d); just as one must "pay the penalty" to a physical doctor for faults in the body, so one must pay the penalty to the elenctic doctor for faults in the soul when these are identified (478d6–7, 479a6–b1).[52] This expression of justice is intimately related to *sophrosune*; an interlocutor may refuse to show moderation by conceding to the *logos* when required to do so. Socrates chastises Callicles, for example, for being unable to undergo *the very thing the argument* is about, namely the discipline that instils moderation (505c3–5). Desires can interfere when a speaker is "battling it through, regardless of whether this makes it more pleasing or unpleasing to those listening to them" (503a). As Socrates explained earlier: if such discussants disagree "they lose their tempers, and think the other is speaking out of malice, trying to win an argument rather than investigating the subject put forward for discussion. Some of them end up parting in a way they should be thoroughly ashamed of, hurling abuse at one another, and exchanging the kind of remarks which make the bystanders annoyed as well" (457c–e). Socrates considers it a greater good to be refuted than to refute (458a) and welcomes giving way to argumentative challenges (506a; see also *Crito* 48d8–e1), unlike Polus, who hurls abuse (461c4), calls Socrates "monstrous" and "shocking" (467b), or Callicles, who loses his temper (506c1–2; see also 487d7 and 503d where Socrates urges Callicles to examine gently). This is a failure to keep within bounds in the discussion, by failing to restrain the impulse to speak and taking more than their discursive share to satisfy their desire for victory at all costs.[53] When discussants participate as required, they are sometimes unwilling to concede to the superior *logos*, which thwarts the establishment of symphonic relationships in the *logos*, and gives their desires (for esteem or victory) undue expression, thus jeopardizing

52 Compare Jessica Moss, "The Doctor and the Pastry Chef: Pleasure and Persuasion in Plato's *Gorgias*," *Ancient Philosophy* 27,2 (2007): 234, who argues that "dialectic is the craft of justice".

53 Though Gorgias and Polus want to be able to say as much as they like (461d8–9), Socrates urges both men to watch over/guard their condition (*phulattein*, 461d4), which recalls the notion of "ruling over oneself" as a characterisation of *sophrosune* (491d).

the establishment of moderation in their souls.[54] Such persons can be sensitive to shame, however, which is closely connected with *sophrosune*.[55] When participants experience shame, they refrain from saying or doing what they like because it is disgraceful to themselves, or to the wider community (whose norms need not be in line with truth, see 482e9, 483a7).[56] As Moss argues, shame operates when desires are interfering with reason; it can sometimes "neutralize" the force of desire "where reason on its own has failed.[57] This perhaps explains the prevalence of shame in the *Gorgias* as a vital tool for the speaker concerned with fostering *sophrosune.*

All five values from T1, then, are exemplified discursively and perform "binding" work within the dialogue. This enables us to appreciate how the very practice of dialogue can foster the orderly states of soul which are its expressed aim. For when participants embark on the communal endeavour of dialogue, position themselves as equals and friends, share the *logos* in *brachulogia*, do their proper work and reciprocate, they are creating a structural arrangement between equals and exemplify *koinonia* and *philia* in so doing.[58] When they follow the proper order of discussion, complete the argument "in an orderly way" (454c1–2 with Gorgias), and follow Socrates' insistence that questions are put "in the right order" (463c3–6 with Polus; 494e3 with Callicles), on the

54 Compare the *Theaetetus*: after Theaetetus has acknowledged the inferiority of all three proposals, the result is that Theaetetus in turn will become more moderate and gentle in argument (ἡμερώτερος σωφρόνως οὐκ οἰόμενος εἰδέναι ἃ μὴ οἶσθα, 210c). See also *Soph.* 230b4–e3.

55 *Charm.* 160e: "temperance makes men ashamed or bashful, and temperance is the same as modesty".

56 Where it is a breach of social norms, this can foster *koinonia*; as Aristotle puts it, "shame dwells in the eyes of others" (*Rh.* II 6, 1384a18). In experiencing this one sees oneself to be embedded in a community (*koinonia*), however individualistic one supposes oneself, like Callicles, to be. On shame as a social emotion, see Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 102.

57 Jessica Moss, "Shame, Pleasure and the Divided Soul," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 29 (2005): 152. Compare Richard McKim, "Shame and Truth in Plato's *Gorgias*," in *Platonic Writing, Platonic Readings*, ed. C. Griswold (New York: Routledge, 1998), 34–48, and Christina Tarnopolsky, "Shame and Rhetoric in Plato's *Gorgias*," in *Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants: Plato's Gorgias and the Politics of Shame*, ed. C. Tarnapolsky (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 29–55.

58 The relationship between justice and equality was strong in Greek thought. In Plato's *Republic*, Glaucon relates popular justice to equality and juxtaposes this with injustice and *pleonexia* (II 359c3–6). In Aristotle's discussion of distributive justice in *Eth. Nic.* V 3, 1131a13–4 he writes "if, then the unjust is unequal, the just is equal, as all men suppose it to be, even apart from argument" (see also *Pol.* III 9). As Gregory Vlastos argues, "the linguistic bond of justice with equality was even closer for the Greeks than it is for us: τὸ ἴσον, ἰσότης, would be the very words to which they would turn for a natural, unstrained, one-word variant for τὸ δίκαιον, δικαιοσύνη". Vlastos, "Plato's Theory of Social Justice," 18–19.

grounds that this is "just" (463c6; see *dikaios* at 451a, 461d2 and *dikaion logon* at 504e), they exemplify *kosmiotes*. When they do their proper work, take no more than their share, and pay the penalty for error, they express justice (478d6–7, 479a6–b1), and when they are prepared to submit to argumentative discipline, act gently, and make concessions when required to do so, they exemplify moderation (505c3–5). The discursive norms advocated by Socrates foster the very values which are under discussion, by modelling them in speech.[59]

Though it might seem as if *koinonia* and *philia* govern interpersonal relationships between participants, *kosmiotes* governs internal relationship within the *logos* (as the craftsman applies shape and structure), and *sophrosune* and *dikaiosune* govern the intrapersonal relationships within the soul (the *pros ti* for the craftsman), there is in fact no neat division between the application of these values; they are operative at times in the giving and receiving of *logos*, and govern relations both between and within persons involved in the *logos*. Justice, for example, is ascribed to the *logos* where there is a "just reckoning" (*dikaion logon*) and to the behaviour of persons towards each other when they give and receive *logos* and make fair suppositions in so doing, and to relationships in their souls when they "pay the penalty" for error. Orderliness can be seen in the *logos*, and exemplified in the behaviour of the participants whenever they are capable of following an orderly argument, make concessions when required to do so, and pay the penalty for error; for *sophrosune* and *dikaiosune* are the names for orderly states of soul (504d). This slippage emphasizes that isomorphism between these seemingly distinct domains, each of which are subject to the same analysis, insofar as they involve disparate parts which are brought into *taxis* and *kosmos* by the operation of the five values. Since the values which govern the binding of wholes are conceived at a high level of generality and abstraction (as the reference to geometry at 508a suggests), this enables them to be expressed in several different kinds of entities wherever there is a differentiated 'whole' bound by these values into unity. Relationality is operative in many domains, and one of these is speech.[60]

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59 Compare Ahbel-Rappe, who argues that "there is an ethical dimension to the practice of the elenchus". "Happiness," 43. And Mary Margaret McCabe: "*Dialegesthai* has normative force … it is a matter of moral character, too". "Is Dialectic as Dialectic does? The virtue of philosophical conversation," in *The Virtuous Life in Greek Ethics*, ed. B. Reis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 72, n. 6.

60 As Burnyeat argues: "Plato finds concord and attunement in many different media. Not only in music, but also in the social order of the ideal city, in the psychic structure of a virtuous individual, and more broadly still, when he is doing physics in the *Timaeus,* throughout the cosmos." ("Mathematics," 56). Compare *Cratylus* 404e–406a where Socrates claims that Apollo, the god of harmony, makes all things move together by a harmonious power, whether in the harmony of a song or the poles of heaven (music,

5 The Normativity of Dialogue

Sections 2–4 have argued that seemingly distinct domains (world, community, soul, *logos*) receive the same analysis. Speech is placed within this framework, because the various items involved function better when relationships between them are brought into *taxis* and *kosmos*. Appreciating how values are exemplified in the binding work of dialogue helps to explain why Socrates is so emphatic about the regulation of dialogue form: when adhered to properly, this fosters relationships of various kinds and expresses harmony and *kosmos*, in accordance with the model in T1. Further, if there are values exemplified *in the very practice of dialogue*, then this suggests that dialogue provides a model, by exemplification, of the values that form its end. This should lead to a reassessment of how this activity is related to its end, and where the value of communication resides.

Now, insofar as *legein* is a craft one would expect it to have a good product distinct from the activity. The other craftsmen Socrates mentions within his account of the ideal speaker – painters, builders and shipwrights, for example, make a painting, a house, a ship, where in each case the product is distinct from the activity. Just as the end of medicine is health, *kosmos tis* in the body, so the end of speaking is *kosmos tis* in soul (justice and *sophrosune*, 504d). This suggests that qua craft, *legein* (including dialogue), is instrumentally valuable for the sake of some product (a good soul) distinct from its exercise.[61] Was Gorgias, then, right to suggest that *legein* is an ethically neutral tool (456d–457c)? The analysis thus far has suggested that the relationship between the end product and the activity of crafting may be differently construed in the case of speech; for the exercise of the craft of *legein* not only causes a good end product (the removal of folly and the production of psychic health), it also exemplifies the values that it produces. In this respect it differs from the production of a house,

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prophecy, medicine and archery are brought under his remit); see also *Symposium* 186a–188e for the medical expression of harmony. See Edward A. Lippman, "Hellenic Conceptions of Harmony," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 16,1 (1963). Since the five values of T1 enable harmony and *kosmos*, it is crucial to note that though values such as *koinonia* and *philia* seem most properly to have interpersonal expression, these need not do so, for Plato. Consider the *Sophist* (253d5–e2) where the stranger lists four kinds of relations (*koinonia*) of forms (*ideai*). For *philia* compare the *Timaeus* (32c), where the elements of the universe are bound together in *philia*, just as elements of the soul in the *Republic* (IV 430e6–12) manifest *philia*, as well as justice and *sophrosune* in their orderly arrangement.

61 See Irwin, *Gorgias*, 223: "a craft is instrumentally valuable for the sake of some product distinct from its exercise".

for example, where the activity of building (hammering and brickwork) does not seem to exemplify the end towards which it aims: shelter. This allows us both to appreciate better how the craft of dialogue brings about the end in question – by providing a model to be emulated, and to locate value within the activity itself. For dialogue is a practice in harmonious relationality, which models a practice of relating to each other in speech, and to one's own self, namely the position one takes on one's own desires and interests. Insofar as dialogue structures the various relationships involved in its activity by exemplifying the values of T1, it is not an ethically neutral tool.

To support a broader conclusion, we need to pay equal attention to Gorgias' claim that rhetoric is a manifestation of power which enslaves (452d–e), and substantiate Dodds' insight that "Gorgias' teaching is the seed of which the Calliclean way of life is the poisonous fruit."[62] Rhetoric is based on a conception of the self as independent and self-interested, just like Callicles' superior man (483a–484c). When one teaches students to engage in monological display (*makrologia*), one is teaching them to ignore the claims of the other party to an equal share, as Callicles urges (483b–d). When one overreaches in argument, or "snatches at one another's meaning on the basis of guesswork", one learns to treat others as inferiors whose contribution is beneath proper attention. When one refuses to make and respond to arguments, one is demonstrating that one sees no need to account for oneself to one's inferiors, which, again, comes to fruition in Callicles' disdain for the many.[63] When one imposes one's view on others, one fails to consider one's own fallibility, and is giving one's own desires (for victory) free reign, as Callicles exhorts (491e8–9, 492a5, 492c4–5). Dominating others in speech is a way of gaining "freedom for oneself and rule over others" (452d5–8, 452e4–8), the very model adopted by Callicles' superior person, who shows himself to be a ruler rather than the slave the many make him (484a2–b1).[64] Gorgianic speech is seen as a competition (*agonizein,*

62 Dodds, *Gorgias*, 15. Compare J. Doyle on the relationship between extended speechmaking and an outlook focused on power and self-interest. Doyle, "The Fundamental Conflict in Plato's Gorgias," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 30 (2006): 92.

63 Gorgias' use of *ochlos* to refer to gatherings in law court, assembly and *boule* (454e–459b) suggests such disdain, since as Joshua Ober has argued, ancient sources describe the citizen gatherings as the mass (*to plethos*) or the many (*hoi polloi*); the mob (*ho ochlos*) was insulting. See Joshua Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens: Intellectual Critics of Popular Rule* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 11.

64 Translation of 452d5–8 is adapted from Irwin, *Gorgias*, but some translations take it that rhetoric is a cause of 'freedom for human beings themselves', where this refers to citizens generally. Given the coupling of this freedom with rule over others, and the mention of enslaving other craft practitioners (452e4–8, 456a7–c7), it becomes clear that the individual rhetorician seeks to dominate.

456c; see also 457a), just as life in the Calliclean community is seen as a competition in which one puts one's own desires above those of others, and tries to secure something for oneself, at the expense of those others (*pleonexia*). Speech beyond Socratic dialogue exemplifies value of its own. In this way, the *Gorgias* shows that speech is not an ethically neutral tool; it is a performative act, which models and thereby fosters a commitment to a way of life in *logos*.[65] This is how the spoken word can "change the souls of man..."[66]

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65 As J. Austin argued in *How to Do Things with Words* (1965), speech is also performative, not just descriptive, which enables speakers to do things in the world – here, to foster a way of life between participants. I am not using "performative" in the precise Austinian sense, however.

66 The full quote is from Dodds, *Gorgias*, 10: "Plato never doubted that the spoken word could 'change the souls of man'". Warm thanks to the participants of the 2019 Plato conference on the *Gorgias* in Prague and to Gábor Betegh, Naly Thaler, James Warren and Vladimír Mikeš for written comments on this paper.

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CHAPTER 3

What Is True Rhetoric in Plato's *Gorgias*?

Jamie Dow

Abstract

In Plato's *Gorgias*, Socrates clearly rejects the conventional rhetoric of his contemporaries. He rejects their skills, and refuses to practise anything like them himself. But he also discusses something else, variously called "technical rhetoric", "good rhetoric", "true rhetoric", and "true politics", that he commends as having some value. What is this practice and skill? Some scholars take this commendation to be Socrates' vindication of a particular kind of public speechmaking. This, I suggest, is wrong. What Socrates vindicates in the *Gorgias* under those headings is not public speechmaking, or anything that Gorgias or his contemporaries would have meant by terms like "rhetoric". What Socrates commends is his own practice of conversation-based philosophy, and by appropriating for it terms like "true politics" and "good rhetoric" he means to indicate that it successfully serves the purposes that people might have imagined were served by skills in speechmaking and public advocacy.

Keywords

rhetoric – dialectic – philosophy – Socrates – Plato – Gorgias – politics – flattery

1 Introduction[1]

It is clear that in Plato's *Gorgias*, Socrates rejects as objectionable the conventional rhetoric of his contemporaries. He rejects their use of this occupation and set of skills, and rejects the suggestion that he practise any such kind of rhetoric himself.[2] It is also clear that there is something else, variously called

1 I am grateful for several very helpful exchanges with Sarah Broadie, Tushar Irani, Marta Jimenez, Filip Karfík, Ondřej Krása, MM McCabe, Vladimír Mikeš, Frisbee Sheffield, and particularly during the *Symposium Platonicum Pragense* of November 2020.

2 I take up in another (unpublished) paper the thorny question of exactly what Socrates' grounds were for this. Draft versions are available at httfps://dow.org.uk/research.

"technical rhetoric", "good rhetoric", "true rhetoric", and "true politics",[3] that he commends as having some value. Some much later Platonist writers such as Olympiodorus seize on this commendation (and a similar commendation in the *Phaedrus*) as vindicating a kind of rhetoric recognisable as such – i.e. as vindicating a certain kind of practice of public advocacy that is viable in the real world. In this paper, I argue that this is wrong. What Socrates vindicates in the *Gorgias* under those headings is not any public speechmaking practice. What he commends is his own practice of conversation-based philosophy, and by calling it "true politics" and "good rhetoric" he is commandeering those terms to indicate that it successfully serves the purposes that people might have imagined were served by a skill in speechmaking, i.e. it delivers benefits for its possessor, the citizens and the city as a whole (or some combination of these). In doing so, he adopts the position staked out in the *Apology*,[4] that his own conversational practices are the greatest blessing to the city, the greatest benefit for its citizens, and render him worthy of free meals in the Prytaneum![5]

It might be thought that this position does not advance beyond a statement of the obvious about the *Gorgias*. But in fact much of the secondary literature presumes that Socrates' contemplation of a "good rhetoric" (i.e. something that is a good version of the type of thing ordinary Greek speakers could be taken to be referring to with terms like "rhetoric") is to be taken at face value.[6] I will highlight below that the ancient tradition was divided over whether Socrates genuinely allowed for a good kind of oratory, with Cicero and Aristotle seeing Socrates as having rejected public speechmaking, and others such as Olympiodorus convinced that Socrates vindicated a purified practice of oratory.

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3 *Grg.* 504d5–6, 517a5, 521d7–8.

4 I follow James Doyle in taking the *Gorgias* to be closely connected to ("haunted by": 39) the *Apology*. "Socratic Methods," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 42 (2012).

5 *Ap.* 30a5–7, 38a1–6, 36e1–3.

6 See e.g. Terence Irwin, *Plato: Gorgias*, *Translated with Notes*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 215–6, who, despite his recognition that Socrates' "true oratory" involves forgoing oratorical techniques, nevertheless sees 504d–e as outlining a political arrangement set out more fully in *Republic*; or Jessica Moss, "The Doctor and the Pastry Chef: Pleasure and Persuasion in Plato's Gorgias," *Ancient Philosophy* 27, 2 (2007): 229–49, 34. The view I am commending is reflected in some passing remarks in Robert Wardy, *The Birth of Rhetoric: Gorgias, Plato and Their Successors* (London: Routledge, 1998), 81, 85, as well as in the overall interpretation of the dialogue's central themes canvassed in James Doyle, "The Fundamental Conflict in Plato's Gorgias," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 30 (2006): 87–100; Rachel Barney, "Gorgias' Defense: Plato and His Opponents on Rhetoric and the Good," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 48,1 (2010): 95–121, esp. 106, 118–119; A. G. Long, *Conversation and Self-Sufficiency in Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 46; Tushar Irani, *Plato on the Value of Philosophy: The Art of Argument in the Gorgias and Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), esp. 29–32. But it is rarely defended in detail as an understanding of what Socrates' "true politics" involves.

2 Key Claims

This paper defends the following claims.

1. Socrates rejects all (or nearly all) public speechmaking to the kinds of gatherings of citizens of which political assemblies and lawcourts are paradigm cases, and consequently sees little value in cultivating an ability ("rhetoric") to undertake such public speechmaking (well).
2. Socrates' recommendation of "true politics" is a recommendation of the kind of philosophical conversation for which he was himself known.

Explaining and defending claim (2) will be the focus of the second part of the paper. It amounts to the claim that Socrates' commandeers and redeploys terminology such as "true politics" and "good rhetoric" in a novel and surprising way to apply to his own practice of small-scale philosophical conversation.[7]

The claim captured in (1) summarises Socrates' rejection of Gorgias' rhetoric as shameful (463d4–5), in his description of rhetoric as having little use (481d1–5), and in his rejection, in the choice of lives discussion with Callicles, of the kind of life that involves "mak[ing] speeches among the people, practis[ing] oratory, and be[ing] active in the sort of politics you people engage in these days" (500c4–7). But it will be helpful to set out more carefully what does and does not fall within the scope of this rejection of public speechmaking and rhetoric. I am suggesting that his rejection covers both a type of activity (public speechmaking), and an ability to undertake that activity (rhetoric). Socrates' rejection of public speechmaking will be our main focus, because claiming that Socrates rejects this activity involves not just the modest view that Socrates rejects Gorgias' specific conception of what an ability in public speechmaking consists in, or his particular motivations for speechmaking, but the more ambitious view that there can be *no* valuable ability or expertise in that kind of activity. There can be no valuable expertise in rhetoric because public speechmaking itself is not of value. This is why a life that includes public speechmaking is not an option for Socrates himself, despite the fact that his motivations would be very different from those of Gorgias and his followers and from those of the orators of the present and past.

The position ascribed to the Socrates of the *Gorgias* in these two claims is in one way wholly unsurprising. It repeats his explicit rejection of public speechmaking in the *Apology* (which covers at least the assembly and the lawcourts), and preserves the "choice of lives" presented in various ways throughout the *Gorgias*, most explicitly at 500c1–8, between the kind of life urged by Gorgias, Polus and Callicles, of rhetoric and public advocacy, and the kind of life

7 See Irani, *Plato on the Value of Philosophy*, 31.

exemplified by Socrates himself, the life of small-scale philosophical conversation. But it amounts to a rejection of a view espoused by some interpreters that Socrates, later in the *Gorgias*, finds a substantial valuable role for public advocacy in the assembly and lawcourts, or discerns a valuable kind of ability to undertake those activities.

It is not part of the purpose of this paper to determine the precise rationale for Socrates' policy, although it will be necessary to say something about this. Our focus will be on the scope of what he rejects when he rejects "rhetoric", and what he is commending under headings such as "good rhetoric" and "true politics".

3 Public Speechmaking, Rhetoric, and the Scope of Socrates' Criticism

What Socrates rejects is what Gorgias proclaims, early on in the dialogue, to be "the greatest good for mankind" (452d3–4). Gorgias characterises it in this way:

> … the ability to persuade by speeches judges in a law court, councillors in a council meeting, and assemblymen in an assembly or in any other political gathering (πολιτικὸς σύλλογος) that might take place. (452e1–4)[8]

Rhetoric is here characterised as an ability. The value of the ability consists in the value of the thing it enables its possessor to do. In this case, this is discharging a certain role in civic institutions, i.e. of persuading gatherings of citizens in courts, councils, and political assemblies. The ensuing discussion confirms that rhetoric is indeed an ability to instil persuasion in the souls of the audience (453a4–5), but clarifies that the type of persuasion is "the kind that takes place in law courts and in those other large gatherings (ὄχλοις), as I was saying a moment ago." (454b5–7) In the souls of listeners, the type of persuasion (πειθώ) that it produces is conviction (πίστις) rather than knowledge (454e5–9) in "law courts and other gatherings (ὄχλων)" (455a3–4). Although there is some suggestion in this opening exchange that rhetoric may have some distinctive subject (the just and the unjust) with which it is concerned, it looks as though this is either abandoned or interpreted in such a way as to include within the orator's province a very wide variety of matters such as the building

8 Translations of the *Gorgias* are those of Donald J. Zeyl in John M. Cooper, ed., *Plato: Complete Works – Edited with Introduction and Notes* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co, 1997), unless otherwise stated.

of harbours, dockyards and fortifications. The idea perhaps is that the just and the unjust are the values in terms of which any proposed verdict in the assembly or lawcourts on such matters is to be commended. At any rate, rhetoric is taken to be an ability whose paradigmatic exercise is in the assembly and lawcourts. In other words, rhetoric is characterised in terms of the *social role* that it enables its possessor to discharge, and within which its abilities are typically exercised, as the persuasive adviser of crowds (ὄχλοι) in public gatherings such as assemblies and lawcourts. This is confirmed by its reiteration in Callicles' friendly advice to Socrates, urging him to devote himself to cultivating an ability to "put a speech together correctly before councils of justice" or to "utter any plausible or persuasive sound" or to "make any bold proposal on behalf of anyone else" (486a1–3). The life of oratory, championed in the dialogue by Gorgias, Polus and Callicles is one of public persuasion in the courts and the assembly, and it is this that is summarised by Socrates in the "choice of lives" passage as follows:

> [How should we live?] Is it the way you urge me toward, to engage in these manly activities, to make speeches among the people, to practice oratory, and to be active in the sort of politics you people engage in these days? (500c4–7)

Gorgias and Callicles see rhetoric as valuable because they see this kind of social role as valuable in certain ways. Socrates' responses to Gorgias and Callicles, taken together, constitute a rejection both of rhetoric – the ability to discharge this socially-specified role – and also of the social role itself that rhetoric is the ability to discharge. And the natural understanding of his position is that these are not two separate rejections, but one. Socrates rejects (as something of no great value) the ability to persuade crowds in the assembly and lawcourts, *precisely because* he rejects (as something of no great value) that social role itself – the persuading of crowds of citizens in those public contexts.

Socrates' position, I suggest, is that he rejects neither just *some particular approach* to discharging the social role of public persuader of crowds in the assembly and lawcourts, nor *some particular specification* of the ability to discharge it, but the social role itself, and as a consequence of that rejection, he rejects even the possibility of a different specification of the ability to persuade by speeches in the assembly and lawcourts, such that it might be something of value for him to cultivate himself. It is the "manly activities", the "making speeches among the people" and the "being active in politics" (in anything like the way his contemporaries would recognise) that he is rejecting.

In doing so, Socrates of the *Gorgias* is simply taking the same position as the Socrates of the *Apology*. There, he calls attention to the fact that he had never spoken in a lawcourt before (17d2–3). And he highlights how strange it is that he is prepared to give advice to his fellow citizens privately, but not in ways that involved "going up" to advise among the "multitude" (πλῆθος), before the city as a whole (31c4–7). His divine sign prevented him from undertaking this kind of public persuasion before crowds in the lawcourts or assembly, that is to say that it prevented him from "doing politics" (31d5) or "engaging with the *demos* as a whole" (δημοσιεύειν, 32a3). These latter expressions do not refer to some further activity beyond persuasive speechmaking in the assembly and lawcourts. They are simply ways of referring to that activity, and as such form part of the explanation of why Socrates had not given speeches in these contexts before, despite his commitment to serving the city by advising his fellow citizens. Indeed, we should notice that in the *Apology* too, Socrates' rejection of this kind of public role is not a rejection of the broader project of serving the interests of the city and of his fellow citizens. Quite the contrary: he sees his rejection of public speechmaking and his preference for small-scale conversation as precisely *allowing* him to be the gift of the god to the city (30d5–31a1), conferring on it the "greatest benefit" (36c3–4, 38a2). The claims made here about Socrates' position in the *Gorgias* simply match his stance in the *Apology*: his rejection of persuasive speechmaking in the lawcourts and assembly (claim 1) is understood as allowing him to practise a different and more valuable kind of civic service (claim 2), undertaken through philosophical conversation.

This evidence highlights that for Socrates, the problems that attach to public speechmaking (and rule it out as an option for himself) are such that they are not eliminated by the practitioner's having a different goal or a different approach. Socrates' goals and hence his priorities and approach, were he to engage in public speechmaking, would be different from those of most other practitioners but he still rejects public speechmaking. The problems with that kind of activity must arise from something other than the particular approach of the practitioner. Likewise, they do not seem to arise from specific distinctive features of Athens, or to be confined to one or two particular polities. They seem to be common at least to all or most actual polities: Socrates is explicit about this in the *Apology*, when he says that his reasons for not engaging in public speechmaking apply not just in Athens, but to "any other multitude" (31e2–3) where justice and lawful propriety are at stake. In both of these ways, then, the problems attached to public speechmaking (the exact nature of which is not our focus here) cannot be easily remedied. In the arguments below, I will say that Socrates took them to be "unavoidable" in the sense that they could not be avoided by anything the prospective practitioner might do. The idea is perhaps that although these problems may not attach to public

speechmaking by logical or metaphysical necessity (perhaps in an idealised state entirely populated by the perfectly virtuous, these problems would not arise, and Socrates might happily engage in public speechmaking), they will always arise in the kinds of states we actually have in the real world, populated by people as they actually are.

Having canvassed the initial plausibility of the position being attributed to Socrates, and particularly his rejection of persuasive speechmaking in civic gatherings, let us immediately deal with some concerns about this view. One concern is regarding its lack of clarity: does this view really succeed in specifying with any precision the object of Socrates' rejection? Another concern will have to do with whether this view can accommodate all of the relevant textual evidence. Let us start with the worry about the lack of clarity.

4 Clarifying Socrates' Rejection of Rhetoric

The Greek for a speech is λόγος, but it is obvious that Socrates is not rejecting all use of λόγοι, since the Greek word also refers to other uses of human speech. Claim 1 says that the use of speech he rejects is to be characterised in social terms – the use of speech to persuade crowds of assembled citizens in contexts typified by the assembly and the lawcourts. Although we are not directly concerned here with identifying the *grounds* on which Socrates rejects this kind of activity, it is clear that on this way of understanding his position, it does not constitute a rejection of long speeches by one person in other sorts of social settings. Equally it does not *in principle* commit Socrates to rejecting the possibility of *teaching* a large crowd of citizens *en masse*, where teaching is understood as the imparting of knowledge by one who has it. But in practice such teaching will be impossible (e.g. due to time limitations, *Grg*. 455a5–6). Gorgias and Socrates agree that the kind of speechmaking in which rhetoric is the expertise (and which Socrates will reject) is to be distinguished from teaching by its social context: it is the kind of persuasion "that takes place in lawcourts and in those other large gatherings (ὄχλοις)" (454b5–6), and the limitations of time imposed by that kind of context render teaching impossible (454c7–455a7). They further agree that "in a large gathering" (ἐν ὄχλῳ, lit. "in a crowd") implies "among those who don't have knowledge" (ἐν τοῖς μὴ εἰδόσιν) (459a4). In principle, Socrates' position might permit persuasive speechmaking to a large crowd of experts, or to convey knowledge where time limitations did not rule this out. But his concern in the *Gorgias* is not with such possibilities – he rejects persuasive speechmaking to crowds who lack knowledge, in contexts such as the lawcourts and assembly where it is not possible to convey knowledge by teaching.

Socrates thus rejects as of no great value a social role that was familiar to his contemporaries and commended to him in the dialogue by Gorgias, Polus and Callicles – the role of orator, i.e. of persuasive adviser in public deliberative contexts such as lawcourts and assemblies. As a consequence, he likewise rejects the expertise or ability of rhetoric that enables its possessor to persuade in such contexts.[9] It is not just that he is critical of the particular way in which Gorgias and his followers exercise rhetoric, or the purposes with which they do so: Socrates rejects *as options for himself* both the exercise of rhetoric and the role of public persuader in the lawcourts and assembly. Socrates' motivations are clearly less self-interested, and more public-spirited, than those of Gorgias, Polus and Callicles. So the fact that Socrates rejects *for himself* public speechmaking and the ability to undertake it, shows that his criticism of these activities and this ability is not confined to the practising of them with faulty motivation. Whatever we take to be the grounds of Socrates' rejection of rhetoric, for example that it is servile and involves flattering (521a2–b2), he takes to be *both* grounds for the criticism of current and past practitioners of public speechmaking *and also* grounds for his own rejection of such a life for himself. His repeated and consistent deployment of the doctor and pastry-chef imagery highlights this: the life of public speechmaking represented by the pastry-chef is not only the path chosen by others, it is also the option that Callicles urges upon Socrates himself and that Socrates refuses to adopt. The option in the choice of lives that Socrates rejects is the life of public speechmaking *for himself*, and when he describes it as a servile and flattering life, he means that it would be servile and flattering *even if he were the person living it.* That is to say that, for Socrates, this life is servile and flattering for reasons that are not derived from, but rather are independent of, the goals of the person living it.

5 Gorgianic Rhetoric outside the Assembly and Lawcourts

It might be objected at this point that although it is clear that Socrates had a policy of avoiding public speechmaking,[10] it is not so clear that Gorgias'

9 We will consider below Socrates' apparent cautious recommendation of certain highly unusual uses of rhetoric, so as to use the roles afforded to speakers in lawcourts in an idiosyncratic way, such as taking the role of prosecutor as well as defendant in one's own trial in order to accuse oneself and ensure one's own conviction, and likewise for family and friends (480b9–d7, 508b5–7), or contriving (μηχανητέον, 481a2) – perhaps by using the role of prosecutor – to secure the acquittal of unjust defendants (480e5–481b5).

10 Socrates calls attention to this in the *Apology* (40a2–c3, see also 31c4–32a3), and explains very clearly that his appearance as a speaker at his own trial is precisely an *exception* to a general policy he has observed throughout his life up to that point. It is this policy with which we are concerned here. Nicholas Denyer, "Authority and the Dialectic of Socrates,"

rhetoric (which is certainly among the targets of Socrates' criticism) was an ability intended solely for exercise in large-scale civic deliberations. The dialogue starts just after what seems to have been a private exhibition of Gorgias' rhetorical abilities (447a1–b8). And Gorgias himself indicates that it is by the expertise of rhetoric that he is able to persuade the previously unwilling patients of his brother and other doctors to comply with treatment (456b1–5). So, if this falls within the scope of the activities and expertise to which Socrates objects,[11] one might suppose that his objections should not be interpreted so as to confine their scope to the exercise of those activities and that expertise in the public contexts of assembly and courts.

The observation is correct but not damaging to the claims being advanced here about Socrates' position. Socrates, I am suggesting, objects to the activity of persuading ignorant crowds in public settings, and does not value an ability (rhetoric) designed to achieve this. It is no objection to ascribing this view to Socrates to point out that this same ability could be deployed also in other settings.

6 Evidence for this Construal of Socrates' Position

Let us turn then to the evidence supporting this proposed construal of Socrates' position. I start with consideration of his overall position, before looking at evidence that relates specifically to one or other of its two components – (1) the rejection of all public speechmaking, and (2) the commendation of a life of philosophical conversation as what is intended in his commendation of "true politics" and "good rhetoric".

in *Authors and Authorities in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. J. Bryan, R. Wardy and J. Warren, *Cambridge Classical Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), helpfully clarifies, in a response to an unpublished paper of mine (see above n. 2) on this topic, that Socrates did not reject private speechmaking.

11 Socrates does not in fact explicitly object to this particular use of rhetoric by Gorgias. And one might note that it is different from the uses of rhetoric that are the main focus of discussion in the *Gorgias*: for insofar as Gorgias operates under his brother's directions, both the things he persuades patients to do (i.e. to submit to treatment of various kinds) and the overall goal of their doing so (i.e. health) are guided by the expertise of medicine. And this represents an important difference between this kind of case and the paradigm exercises of rhetoric that Gorgias and his followers are commending, i.e. in public life, where both the immediate persuasive goals and the longer-term objectives are whatever the orator thinks best (see e.g. 467b3–5). As such, this ancillary role for rhetoric has similarities with the role assigned to rhetoric in the *Statesman* (304a6–e2) where rhetoric is subordinated to statesmanship. This private use of rhetoric is also directed towards one patient at a time, rather than to large numbers simultaneously in a crowd. As such we should be cautious about drawing conclusions regarding whether these private activities fall within the scope of Socrates' rejection of rhetoric.

The first body of evidence that we should understand Socrates' position in the way proposed is the various ways in which the dialogue from start to finish presents a choice of lives, with the two options being a life of public advocacy and a life of philosophical conversation. This represents important support for both claims (1) and (2), because this choice only makes sense if Socrates is rejecting *all* public speechmaking (1) and not – as those who deny (1) tend to suppose – commending some suitably adjusted way of undertaking public speechmaking under the heading of "good rhetoric" or "true politics". If Socrates' commendation of "good rhetoric" and "true politics" *were* a commendation of a particular way of undertaking public advocacy, then the choice of lives as the dialogue presents it would be undermined. There would either be some third option on the table (a life of public advocacy, suitably modified from the one commended by Gorgias, Polus and Callicles), or the choice of lives would collapse entirely, since Socrates' would no longer be opposing the kinds of *activities* that his interlocutors were urging upon him, but rather commending them (albeit to be pursued with different motives). Whereas if Socrates' commendation of "good rhetoric" / "true politics" is an appropriation of those terms so as to apply them to his own practices of philosophical conversation, the choice of lives remains intact exactly as it is presented. The next section explores this evidence in more detail.

7 The Choice of Lives in the *Gorgias*

The choice of lives is set up right at the start of the dialogue. The life Gorgias represents is characterised by public speechmaking, principally in public deliberative forums like the assembly and the courts, but also the kind of public "display" (ἐπίδειξις) that the dialogue represents him as having finished just before it begins (447a1–b8). Socrates' life is correspondingly characterised by dialogue (διαλεχθῆναι 447c1). And these rival kinds of lives and characteristic activities show us, for each of the protagonists, "who he is" (447d1).

The same choice of lives is clearly emphasised right at the end of the dialogue.

> I believe that I'm one of a few Athenians—so as not to say I'm the only one, but the only one among our contemporaries—to take up the true political craft and practice the true politics. This is because the speeches I make on each occasion do not aim at gratification but at what's best. They don't aim at what's most pleasant. And because I'm not willing to do those clever things you recommend, I won't know what to say in court.

> And the same account I applied to Polus comes back to me. For I'll be judged the way a doctor would be judged by a jury of children if a pastry chef were to bring accusations against him. Think about what a man like that, taken captive among these people, could say in his defense, if somebody were to accuse him and say, "Children, this man has worked many great evils on you, yes, on you. He destroys the youngest among you by cutting and burning them, and by slimming them down and choking them he confuses [or paralyses] them." (521d6–522a1)

In the final stage of his exchange with Callicles, Socrates contrasts the life urged upon him by Callicles with the one that he actually leads. In doing so, he picks up the imagery of the doctor and the pastry-chef from the exchange with Polus earlier in the dialogue. It is clear that Socrates views himself as taking the role of the doctor (521e3). As in that earlier exchange, the pastry-chef represents the rhetorician, i.e. the person who has an expertise in public speechmaking. And in this imagery, the use of the pastry-chef to characterise the rhetorician highlights what Socrates thinks speechmaking will inevitably involve, i.e. flattery, pandering to the audience. It is a characterisation of rhetoric in general, not of Gorgianic rhetoric specifically: in fact – as we have seen – Socrates leaves open to Gorgias the option of protesting that his particular approach to public speechmaking is such as to fall *outside* the scope of Socrates' characterisation of rhetoric. This option is never taken up, so Socrates' characterisation can be presumed to apply to experts in public speechmaking quite generally (including Gorgias and those who follow his approach). As such, in this final exchange with Callicles, this way of presenting the contrast between "true politics" and the life of rhetoric urged by Callicles is explicitly emphasising its continuity with the choice of lives presented earlier on: between the life of public speechmaking and the life of philosophy. It counts in favour of an interpretation that preserves this continuity.

Notice that in this reprise of the choice of lives, the practice of Socrates' favoured option is called "true political expertise" (521d7), but it is characterised in a number of ways that make clear that it is a life of philosophy, of the kind actually lived by Socrates, that he is talking about. Socrates is one of only a few Athenians, if not the only one, to live this way (521d6–8). This kind of political expertise leaves you unable to come up with anything to say in court (521d8–e2, see also "dizzy" at 527a2). It is represented in the analogy by the doctor who "confuses" or "paralyses" his patients (ἀπορεῖν ποιεῖ, 522a1) – i.e. has precisely the aporetic effect that Socrates' philosophical practices have on his interlocutors. Socrates' true politics explicitly excludes the kind of skill that would be usable in court, and any kind of ability to "protect oneself" (522c5–6)

in public.[12] The only kind of "protection" that this true politics provides is against speaking or acting unjustly, in ways that are supposed to be established and tested by "refutation" (ἐξελέγχοι, ἐξελεγχόμενος, 522c7–d7). It is surely the life of philosophical conversation, the life that Socrates actually lived (or is portrayed by Plato as having lived), that he is talking about.

The continuity in the choice of lives from the start to the end of the dialogue is also reflected in the dialogue's closing myth. At the end of the myth, he contrasts the good life he champions with the life honoured by most people and by Callicles. The latter is the traditional life of the powerful in public life, including public speechmaking, "those active in the affairs of cities" (525d4–5); and Socrates rejects it as he says Rhadamanthus does in the next world (in line with claim 1 above). His preferred life is exemplified by the philosopher minding his own business (526c1–5), and "practising truth" (526d6), in such a way as to enable you to "protect yourself" in the way referred to above (suggesting claim 2), and this is contrasted with the life or lives Callicles and Polus and Gorgias commend (527a8–b2). In this choice, he urges Callicles (and everyone else) to "listen to me and follow me where I am" (527c4–5) i.e. live like Socrates (claim 2). This *may* eventually lead to some consideration of politics, but only once they have got better at deliberation and generally got into a better condition, and even then it may not do so (527d2–5) (see claim 1).

The presentation of the choice of lives as one between a life of public advocacy and one of philosophy is thus clear from the start and end of the dialogue. We have no reason not to take at face value its characterisation along exactly such lines, by Socrates to Callicles, in the most famous passage in which this choice is presented.

> SOCRATES: For you see, don't you, that our discussion's about this (and what would even a man of little intelligence take more seriously than this?), about the way we're supposed to live. Is it the way you urge me toward, to engage in these manly activities, to make speeches among the people, to practice oratory, and to be active in the sort of politics you people engage in these days? Or is it the life spent in philosophy? (500c1–8)

Notice here that the life Socrates is rejecting is characterised in terms of the social role it involves taking, not in terms of any particular aim or attitude with

12 That is to say that it excludes all public speechmaking. Hence Socrates' reference to "flattering oratory" (522d7) is a clarification of what is involved in "oratory" and not a subdivision of it.

which that role is occupied. Insofar as flattery enters the discussion, it does so because Socrates thinks it is unavoidably involved in occupying the role of public advocate, not merely as one way among many of doing so. What is rejected is the life of public speechmaking itself (claim 1). And what is vindicated in its place is a life of philosophy, the life exemplified by Socrates (claim 2).

Notice also that within the list of things that characterise the life Callicles is commending and Socrates is rejecting, the phrases "make speeches among the people" and "practise oratory" are entirely unqualified. Socrates seems to be referring to recognisable social practices of public advocacy, not to some specific way of undertaking them. This stands in contrast to his reference to "politics", where he *does* add qualifications to make clear what he is referring to: in this case he is not rejecting every form of engagement with fellow citizens, but only "the sort of politics you people engage in these days". We have no reason not to take Socrates' unqualified rejection of the social practice of public speechmaking at face value (claim 1).

The structure of the argument that follows (and how it is connected to the preceding discussion of pleasure and the good) is also instructive. Socrates suggests that he and Callicles should decide which life they should live on the basis of what those two lives are like (500c8–d4). Socrates reminds Callicles of their previous agreement that the good and the pleasant are distinct, and that there are human practices for securing each of these (500d6–e1). Since he further claims that pleasure-directed practices are inexpert and irrational, whereas those directed towards the real good are expertises (τέχναι), it is clear that if he can show that the life of the orator is pleasure-directed, and the life of philosophy is good-directed, that it is the latter that should be chosen in preference to the former (500e3–501c6, see also 513d7–514a3). Accordingly, Socrates embarks upon a classification of practices: medicine is classified as good-directed, and there is a long list of pleasure-directed practices. This starts with pastry-baking, but extends to flute-playing, chorus training, dithyrambs, tragedy, and popular harangue (δημηγορία). The crucial question is where the practices of public advocacy, rhetoric and speechmaking fit in. When Socrates asks him to classify them, Callicles resists classifying speechmaking as a whole, and insists that although some is pleasure-directed, some is good-directed (503a2–4). Although the full development of Socrates' rejection of this takes several pages, his rejection is clear. It is reasonably clear already at 503d2–3, where Socrates says, "I don't see how I could say any of these men has proved to be such a man." (i.e. the kind of man that systematically secured the good of the citizens, rather than one who was concerned only with their pleasure, by filling up whatever appetites they had). But it is put beyond doubt when the argument is brought to its conclusion.

> SOCRATES: So it looks as though our earlier statements were true, that we don't know any man who has proved to be good at politics in this city. You were agreeing that none of our present-day ones has, though you said that some of those of times past had, and you gave preference to these men [Themistocles, Cimon, Miltiades, and Pericles]. But these have been shown to be on equal footing with the men of today. ... I'm not criticizing these men either, insofar as they were servants of the city. I think rather that they proved to be better servants than the men of today, and more capable than they of satisfying the city's appetites. But the truth is that in redirecting its appetites and not giving in to them, using persuasion or constraint to get the citizens to become better, they were really not much different from our contemporaries. That alone is the task of a good citizen. Yes, I too agree with you that they were more clever than our present leaders at supplying ships and walls and dockyards and many other things of the sort. (516e9–517a4, 517b2–c4)

Socrates' appeal here is to historical facts. There have been many and varied people who have, over the years, lived the kind of life of public advocacy that Callicles commends. They have been different in all kinds of ways. But none of them, not even those thought of as "better", has provided an example of successful good-directed activity in public advocacy. Despite their differences, they are all ultimately (with varying levels of success) engaged in pleasure-directed activity. Socrates' claim seems to be that taking the role of politician or public advocate unavoidably involves serving the pleasures and appetites of the people, regardless of what is really good for them, and that these historical facts offer evidential support for that claim.

We might wish to fault Socrates' reasoning here. He has not *proved* that it is impossible for there to be a way of discharging the role of public advocate in a way that systematically aims at and (to some worthwhile extent) achieves the genuine good of citizens. But he has highlighted that this logical possibility remains uninstantiated. And he seems happy, on this (presumably inductive) basis, to draw the more generalised conclusion – i.e. that such an option is not instantiated because it is not in fact possible. His conclusion is that this shows that the life of public advocacy is to be rejected in the choice of lives – rejected, that is, as an option for Socrates himself – in favour of the life of philosophy.

Now, it might be true that, for all Socrates has said, the possibility of someone's occupying the role of public advocate, in a way that is good-directed and successful to a worthwhile degree, remains open to Socrates himself and anyone else who chose to pursue it. That something has not in fact been done does not entail that it is not possible. But this would be to *disagree* with the Socrates of the *Gorgias,* not to champion his position. Socrates takes the fact

that all orators, past and present alike, have served the appetites of the citizens and not what is best for them, to show something quite general about undertaking "the business of the city" (515a2, b8–c1) – the kind of public advocacy that Callicles urges Socrates to take up, and blames him for not doing so (515a2–3). Public advocacy does not count as exercising "the true political craft and practis[ing] the true politics" (521d6–8), in the way that Socrates' life of philosophical conversation does. We can see that this is Socrates' conclusion from the fact that Socrates does not consider public advocacy to be a viable option *for himself*, despite the fact that his objective as a citizen is to make his fellow citizens as good as possible. He does not regard public advocacy as a way in which he could secure that objective. And this equally explains why his appeal to Callicles, Polus and Gorgias is not to revise the objective with which they practise public advocacy, but to change their way of life to match Socrates' (527c4–6).

8 Supposed Evidence of Socrates Commending Public Advocacy

Those who suppose that Socrates does not reject public advocacy wholesale tend to point to passages in which he appears to take seriously the idea of "good rhetoric", and those in which he appears to commend certain kinds of public advocacy. In the section that follows, I will show how these passages function within the dialogue. I concede that Socrates does recognise the value of some very bizarre uses of public advocacy (taking up the role of prosecutor in order to secure one's own conviction and punishment or that of family or friends; and somehow contriving – perhaps through unorthodox uses of the role or prosecutor or defendant – to ensure a wrongdoer's acquittal). But apart from these, his general position is that "good rhetoric" (in the ordinary sense of those words) is non-existent and impossible; there is no available way of practising "true politics" through public advocacy. But this does not mean that "true politics" is non-existent: it does exist, but it consists of philosophical conversation of the kind practised by Socrates (and there are some hints in how Socrates expresses his view that philosophical conversation could be seen also as an instantiation of "good rhetoric", though that is not made explicit). We can describe Socrates' position on "good rhetoric" as having three stages.

Stage One (462b3–503a1): Socrates' arguments to Polus, and to Callicles up to 503a1 treat the whole of rhetoric as part of flattery, and reject it. "Politics" in this sense (i.e. active participation in public deliberation as a speaker or advocate) is treated as unavoidably involving flattery, and on this basis, the practice so central to the life and professional concerns of Gorgias, Polus and Callicles is wholly rejected as a way of life for Socrates or anyone else. There

is no recognition of a good type of oratory at this stage. Socrates' argument here is that because oratory is directed at pleasure not at what is best, it is an inferior kind of activity, and good citizens should reject it in favour of activities that do aim at what is best. He sets out to show that oratory is among the activities directed towards pleasure rather than towards what is best.

Stage Two (503a2–517c4): Callicles seeks to block Socrates' argument by introducing a distinction between two types of rhetorical practice: "good oratory" that aims at the best for the citizens and the standard flattering type that aims only to gratify them (503a2–4). Callicles wants to say that the present generation of orators are of the bad, flattering kind, but there were some orators of the good kind in previous generations (Themistocles, Cimon, Miltiades, Pericles). If Callicles can show that there is a good type of oratory that aims at what is best, then Socrates will be forced to recognise this as a valuable kind of activity around which to organise one's life. This is where, and why, the idea of a good type of oratory is first introduced, and not by Socrates. But Socrates runs with the idea in order to refute Callicles' claim. He fleshes out more precisely what it would take for something to count as "good rhetoric" (504d5–e3). In doing so, his primary objective, which he ultimately achieves, is to show that there are no examples of "good rhetoric" of this kind. Once the concept is clearly delineated, it is clear that it is uninstantiated (516e9–517c4) and the implication seems to be that it is in practice impossible to instantiate, such that this is not a realistic life option for Socrates or anyone else.

Stage Three (517c4 onwards): Socrates drops the "good oratory" terminology in favour of speaking about "good politics" – in doing so, he is not really changing the subject ("practising oratory" and "being active in politics" were happily used as synonyms back at 500c5–7, as are various other expressions subsequently such as "engaging in the city's business" (515a2), being a "fine and good citizen in the city" (518b1)). But doing so enables him to focus on what the proper objective of an active citizen is. Rhetoric purports to be a way, perhaps the best way, of achieving the proper (valuable) objective of a citizen, and thereby of engaging in "good politics" (519b2–d4, 520a3–6). This objective is agreed to be: to promote what is best for the citizens, which is to make them as good as possible (515c1–3). As a result, although Socrates thinks that there is no kind of *public advocacy,* i.e. no kind of *rhetoric*, that can achieve this objective, he does think that there is *some activity* that can achieve it. And that activity is philosophical conversation of the kind that is central to his own life. Once it is clearly understood what it takes for a practice to count as "good politics", it opens the door for Socrates to claim[13] that philosophical conversation

13 He does not really argue for this claim in the *Gorgias*. He testifies that his activities *aim* at what is best for citizens, and he implies (by casting himself as the doctor, 521e2–522a7;

alone is such a practice (at least among options that are realistically available) (521d6–8). By focusing on the aims of political participation, i.e. “caring for the citizens” (513e5–7), or what those “active in politics should be doing” (515c2–3), Socrates is able to claim that it is his own way of life that best instantiates, and alone instantiated at that time, the features of “true politics” (521d7) such as challenging their appetites and undermining their misplaced confidence (producing “confusion” (*aporia*), like the doctor’s treatments do (521e8–522a1)), so as to make them as good as possible, as I have shown above.

This outline of how talk of “good oratory” and “true politics” features in the *Gorgias* indicates how the key passage should be understood.

> SOCRATES: So this is what that skilled and good orator will look to when he applies to people’s souls whatever speeches he makes as well as all of his actions, and any gift he makes or any confiscation he carries out. He will always give his attention to how justice may come to exist in the souls of his fellow citizens and injustice be gotten rid of, how self-control may come to exist there and lack of discipline be gotten rid of, and how the rest of excellence may come into being there and badness may depart. Do you agree or not?
>
> CALLICLES: I do.
>
> (*Grg.* 504d5–e4)

In context, this is Socrates spelling out a distinction made by Callicles, between flattering oratory and good oratory, with a view to testing Callicles’ claim that there is a genuinely beneficial kind of oratorical practice. Callicles attempts to support this view by suggesting that some of the great statesmen of the past were of this kind. Socrates, on the other hand, will reject this view and claim that once we are clear on what it would take to count as “good oratory”, it is clear that such a practice does not exist – no orator past or present instantiates it. The conclusion is announced by Socrates at 516e9–517a6.

Given that this is how this passage functions in the argument of the dialogue, it seems simply a mistake to take it as a straightforward practical commendation by Socrates of a particular kind of public advocacy. To do so would be to ignore the context in which this passage comes. At best, we might say that, in setting out a set of features that would make a practice count as “good oratory”, it not only forms part of an explicit argument to the effect that there neither is nor has been in the past any such practice of public advocacy, but

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and see 522b7–c1) that they constitute unappreciated genuine benefits. His claim to be the city’s greatest benefactor is developed more extensively in the *Apology* esp. 29d2–30b4, 30d5–31c3, 36b3–37a1.

also implicitly invites reflection as to whether anything else might meet these criteria and so constitute a beneficial kind of "good oratory". Perhaps there is some practice (whether as yet instantiated or not) that produces justice, self-control and excellence in the souls of citizens and gets rid of injustice, indiscipline and evil, and which does so by applying *logoi* (speeches, arguments) to people's souls, by giving gifts, and by taking things away.[14] This passage does not assert *that* there is such a practice. But it perhaps can be seen as implicitly inviting reflection on *whether* there is, or could be. If so, we might notice that such an implication is entirely compatible with the second key claim of this paper, that for Socrates "good rhetoric", as well as "true politics", consists in the kind of philosophical conversation that he himself practises. He applies *logoi* to people's souls, he gives the gift of stirring people up to seek virtue,[15] and he takes away injustice and the false conceit of knowledge. Nothing in this passage commits Socrates to recognising any beneficial activity beyond philosophy – the activity at the centre of his preferred option in the choice of lives.

When we attend to the organisation of the dialogue around the choice of lives between the life represented by Gorgias and that represented by Socrates, and to the precise ways in which phrases like "good rhetoric" and "true politics" are used, we find solid grounds for supposing that Socrates' position on rhetoric and public advocacy in the *Gorgias* is continuous with the position of Socrates in the *Apology*, summarised in the twin claims that are the focus of this paper.

In the next section, I consider briefly the extent to which these claims need to be revised or qualified in the light of passages where Socrates appears to countenance certain valuable kinds of public speechmaking.

9 Possible Exceptions and Modifications

The first point to note is that, insofar as Socrates of the *Gorgias* is being seen as adopting the same stance towards public speechmaking as Socrates of the *Apology*, we should see this stance, summarised in the two claims above, as admitting of some exceptions. Most obviously, Socrates' delivery of his defence speech at his own trial, the *Apology* itself, is precisely such an exception. Within

14 Socrates' wording, "any gift he gives, *if he gives one*, or any confiscation he carries out, *if he takes anything away*", (504d7–8) perhaps suggests that these are somehow more optional elements of good rhetoric. Whereas applying *logoi* to people's souls and performing "actions" are not hedged around with caution in the same way.

15 Socrates explicitly describes himself as the god's gift to his fellow citizens at *Apology* 30d7–e1.

the *Apology*, Socrates highlights that making a public speech like the one he is making is not his normal pattern of behaviour, and is in fact the kind of practice he had rejected, as a matter of policy.[16] Socrates' countenancing of some rather surprising uses of rhetoric in the *Gorgias* should, I suggest, be seen in precisely this light.

> SOCRATES: So, if oratory is used to defend injustice, Polus, … it is of no use to us at all, unless one takes it to be useful for the opposite purpose: that he should accuse himself first and foremost, and then too his family and anyone else dear to him who happens to behave unjustly at any time; and that he should not keep his wrongdoing hidden but bring it out into the open, so that he may pay his due and get well… He should be his own chief accuser, and the accuser of other members of his family, and use his oratory for the purpose of getting rid of the worst thing there is, injustice, as the unjust acts are being exposed.
>
> •••
>
> And, on the other hand, to reverse the case, suppose a man had to harm someone, an enemy or anybody at all, provided that he didn't suffer anything unjust from this enemy himself—for this is something to be on guard against—if the enemy did something unjust against another person, then our man should see to it in every way, both in what he does and what he says, that his enemy does not go to the judge and pay his due. And if he does go, he should scheme to get his enemy off without paying what's due. If he's stolen a lot of gold, he should scheme to get him not to return it but to keep it and spend it in an unjust and godless way both on himself and his people. And if his crimes merit the death penalty, he should scheme to keep him from being executed, preferably never to die at all but to live forever in corruption, but failing that, to have him live as long as possible in that condition. Yes, this is the sort of thing I think oratory is useful for, Polus, since for the person who has no intention of behaving unjustly it doesn't seem to me to have much use—if in fact it has any use at all—since its usefulness hasn't in any way become apparent so far. (480b7–481b5)

The first question to consider is: what kind of "recommendation" is made in these passages of the practices they describe? It seems ambiguous. "If oratory

16 See references in n. 5 above.

is used to defend injustice [in the way you might expect], it is useless, unless one takes it to be useful [in a different way]" (480b7–c1). And the final conclusion is equally ambiguous: "this is the sort of thing oratory is useful for … if in fact it has any use at all—since its usefulness hasn't in any way become apparent so far" (481b1–5). The point seems to be that none of the normal uses of public advocacy are of value, and that *if public advocacy has any value at all*, it is in these strange, idiosyncratic kinds of ways. It is not that Socrates is insincere. His seriousness is strongly implied both immediately after this passage (481b6–9) and in the reference back to it at 508b3–7. It is just that these are marginal cases. Rhetoric is not generally beneficial to anyone, but Socrates concedes that he is able to conceive of some circumstances where it is beneficial. But these are rare: accusing yourself or your family and friends is an extremely unusual legal move[17] to start with, but Socrates highlights that even this is only a fallback strategy: a person's aim should be to avoid injustice in the first place; self-accusation becomes relevant only in those cases where one has failed to do so. So, the use of rhetoric to benefit someone is rare. Its valuable use as a way to harm someone is equally unusual: it is valuable only when it is necessary to harm someone, someone who has committed some injustice, and in circumstances where one can harm them without incurring greater injustice from them. In such circumstances, the use of rhetoric to prevent them from coming to justice would be valuable. These are convoluted possibilities. The second of them is not repeated when Socrates later refers back to this passage at 508b3–7. They may be sincerely meant, but they do not undercut, rather they serve to emphasise, Socrates' general position on the value of rhetoric. That is that rhetoric is useless, except when used in these bizarre and unusual ways.[18]

Does Socrates make a more general recommendation of an expertise in public advocacy, i.e. of rhetoric, at 508c1–3?

> SOCRATES: We must either refute this argument … or else, if this is true, we must consider what the consequences are. [*Various Socratic conclusions are then mentioned from earlier in the dialogue*], … and that a person who is to be an orator the right way should be just and be knowledgeable in what is just, the point Polus in his turn claimed Gorgias to have agreed to out of shame. (508a8–b3, c1–3)

17 Its strangeness is famously part of the setup of the *Euthyphro*.

18 I am grateful to Ondřej Krása for discussion of these issues.

The answer is: no. This passage comes as part of Socrates' clarification of what would be involved in a beneficial activity in general, and in a beneficial kind of "good rhetoric" in particular. These are with a view to evaluating whether "good rhetoric" exists (now or in the past), and ultimately to determining which option to take in the choice of lives. The claim being made here is that what it would take to practice oratory "in the right way" (ὀρθῶς, 508c1) includes being just and possessing knowledge of what is just. As Socrates points out, this is what Gorgias had been forced to agree earlier in the dialogue. But this simply serves to remind us of the problems this brings. Their being just and knowing what is just guarantees that the orator's exercise of their expertise will be beneficial. But it rules out the possibility of there being any such oratory in the real world. When Gorgias agrees that anyone who learns rhetoric must be just and know what is just, he runs into contradiction because this claim commits him to denying the obvious fact that orators sometimes do use rhetoric unjustly – a fact that he has already recognised.[19] Although in a sense this passage is a specification of "good oratory" and a commendation of it. It is not really in any sense a practicable commendation, because the conditions it specifies cannot realistically be met. As such, this passage is entirely compatible with the position ascribed to Socrates here.

These insights enable us to make sense of a remark very near the end of the dialogue. Socrates claims that his position "survives refutation and remains steady" (527b2–4), a position which includes his saying that "oratory and every other activity is always to be used in support of what's just." (527c3–4). This implies that oratory is "to be used" (χρηστέον). But the passages just discussed highlight the kinds of things that would fall within the scope of this commendation. Just as at 508c1–3, the idea might be that it specifies a condition for the valuable use of oratory, even if that condition is in practice impossible to meet. Or alternatively, it might be recapitulating the recognition from 480b7–481b5,

19 See Barney, "Gorgias' Defense", 104–6. The claim that a trained orator is just and knows what is just can of course be understood in a looser or a tighter sense. Gorgias plays on the ambiguity. He is responding to the charge that rhetoric is a dangerous activity, practised by those ignorant of justice, so as to make them falsely seem knowledgeable, on audiences that are equally ignorant (459c8–e8). It is no response to that charge to insist (as he breezily attempts to) that his pupils are people who, *in a loose, everyday sense* are just and know what is just (460a3–4). The refutation requires Socrates' tighter sense. Only this will yield a defence against the charge that his teaching of rhetoric is dangerous and irresponsible. And likewise here, "good rhetoric" requires that its practitioner be just and have knowledge of what is just in the tighter sense that guarantees that exercising such rhetoric will be beneficial and actually produce justice and virtue.

and 508b3–7 that there are some cases, albeit bizarre and unusual ones, where real-world public speechmaking can be undertaken justly.

10 The *Gorgias* as Viewed in Antiquity

The overall picture of Socrates' attitude towards public speechmaking in the *Gorgias* receives support from how the *Phaedrus* looks back on the arguments of the *Gorgias*. Plato's *Phaedrus* shows clear awareness of the (presumably earlier) *Gorgias.* Most obvious is the consideration given to the suggestion that rhetoric is an "artless practice" (ἄτεχνος τριβή).

> SOCRATES: But could it be, my friend, that we have mocked the art of speaking more rudely than it deserves? For it might perhaps reply, "What bizarre nonsense! Look, I am not forcing anyone to learn how to make speeches without knowing the truth; on the contrary, my advice, for what it is worth, is to take me up only after mastering the truth. But I do make this boast: even someone who knows the truth couldn't produce conviction on the basis of a systematic art without me."
>
> PHAEDRUS: Well, is that a fair reply?
>
> SOCRATES: Yes, it is—if, that is, the arguments now advancing upon rhetoric testify that it is an art. For it seems to me as if I hear certain arguments approaching and protesting that that is a lie and that rhetoric is not an art but an artless practice. As the Spartan said, there is no genuine art of speaking without a grasp of truth, and there never will be. (*Phdr*. 260d3–e7)

The section preceding this passage follows Socrates of the *Gorgias* in rejecting the idea that there could be a valuable expertise practised by the ignorant on the ignorant. And here too the criticism considered, and seemingly rejected by Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, is that advanced in the *Gorgias* by Socrates against Polus and Gorgias, to support the rejection of rhetoric as disgraceful and untechnical. The *Phaedrus* shows Socrates developing a position in which he recognises a genuinely technical and valuable art of rhetoric, and some might imagine that this builds on Socrates' remarks about a true politics and good rhetoric in the *Gorgias.* But in fact the crucial move highlighted here – the recognition of a genuine art (τέχνη) of rhetoric – is nowhere defended in the *Gorgias*. In fact, the *Phaedrus* develops this supposed[20] rehabilitation of

20 It seems to me an open question whether the *Phaedrus* genuinely recommends anything that would be recognisable to us as "rhetoric". We should recognise the possibility that in

rhetoric without any reference to the earlier discussion of true politics in the *Gorgias*. Insofar as precedents are invoked, they are Pericles and Anaxagoras (269a6, 270a3–8), and the "dialecticians" (266b3–c1), where the latter's dialectical expertise is explicitly distinguished from rhetoric.[21] Insofar as the *Phaedrus* refers back to the *Gorgias*, it is Socrates' rejection of rhetoric that is in view. If our interpretation is correct, this is exactly what one would expect, since on this view, the rejection of rhetoric is not qualified or retracted – what is endorsed in its place is not rhetoric at all, but Socratic philosophical conversation.

The interpretation proposed here thus matches the way the *Gorgias* is viewed from the *Phaedrus*. But it also matches the way it is viewed from some other key perspectives in antiquity. A detailed exploration of the reception in antiquity of Socrates' stance towards rhetoric within the *Gorgias* is beyond our scope here. But it is worth noting that in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, the principal Platonic text explicitly engaged with is the *Gorgias*,[22] and the references are to its rejection of rhetoric, not to any supposed rehabilitation of rhetoric or canvassing of "good rhetoric". The principal Socratic views from the *Gorgias* to which Aristotle calls attention are the claim that rhetoric is the counterpart to pastry-baking, and the claim that it fails to be an expertise (τέχνη).[23] Likewise, when at the end of the *Sophistical Refutations* Aristotle catalogues his predecessors in developing an account of rhetorical expertise, Plato doesn't even get a mention. That would be surprising if it were true that in both *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus,* a foundation for a technical, valuable kind of rhetoric had been laid. But it is entirely what you would expect if the Platonic contribution was being viewed as consisting in the provision of arguments for the rejection of rhetoric. The case of the *Phaedrus* is more complicated.[24] But as far as the *Gorgias* is

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this dialogue too, Socrates' recommendation for a good, technical kind of "rhetoric" turns out really to be a recommendation of his own conversational philosophical method, i.e. dialectic. Exploring the merits of this suggestion is beyond the scope of the present paper.

21 It is a reference to the use of dialectic in understanding the nature of things through the use of collection and division, rather than to any process of influencing the souls of others (*Phdr*. 265d3–266c1).

22 My suggestions of some passages that subtly engage with positions from the *Phaedrus* are offered in J. Dow, *Passions and Persuasion in Aristotle's* Rhetoric (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 79–82.

23 *Rh.* I 1, 1354a1, 7–11.

24 Aristotle's explicit engagement with the *Phaedrus* is considerably less than his engagement with the *Gorgias*, for reasons we can only speculate about. But equally there are questions about whether the knowledge conditions set in the *Phaedrus* for the exercise of an expertise of rhetoric are ones that readers would have thought anybody could actually meet. And certainly, it is philosophical conversation that is recommended over speech-making (written or oral) in the concluding sections of the dialogue (see esp. 276e4–277a4).

concerned, Aristotle's omission of Plato from this list (despite his clear awareness of the content of the *Gorgias*) matches the interpretation proposed here. What is offered in the *Gorgias* is not a positive account of a valuable kind of rhetoric, but rather a series of challenges to which any positive account of rhetoric must answer, and if, as the evidence of the *Rhetoric* suggests, this is what Aristotle also sees, it provides no grounds for Plato's inclusion in his catalogue.

Socrates (presumably primarily Plato's Socrates) had a reputation later in antiquity as an opponent of rhetoric. In both his *Brutus* and the *De Oratore*, Cicero lists Socrates as an opponent of oratory: he opposed and refuted the teachers of oratory with "a certain subtlety of argumentation";[25] and he is listed as the "source and head" of the band of philosophers that reject the idea that rhetoric could convey knowledge or bring benefits to states or to humankind more generally.[26] This can only be a reference back to the *Gorgias*. And if in Cicero's day, the passages about good rhetoric and true politics were being read as offering support for anything recognisable as rhetoric, those passages were clearly being forgotten or ignored in the passages just mentioned. Much more likely is that the *Gorgias* was being understood along the lines proposed here – it does not recommend any kind of rhetoric or public speechmaking, but commends Socratic philosophical conversation instead.

Of course, the reception of the *Gorgias* is not unanimous about its rejection of rhetoric. Neoplatonists in particular came to adopt a much more positive view of rhetoric,[27] and interpreted the *Gorgias* as rejecting only a very specific approach to public speechmaking, and even as commending an alternative, valuable approach instead.[28] Whatever the overall merits of their view of rhetoric, the understanding of the *Gorgias* proposed here commits us to siding

The *Phaedrus* certainly represents Socrates as making an explicit change in position on rhetoric from the position of Socrates in the *Gorgias,* but Socrates' overall stance in the *Phaedrus* towards public speechmaking is, at the very least, complex.

25 Cicero, *Brutus* 8,31.

26 Cicero, *De Oratore* I 42.

27 Yosef Z. Liebersohn, *The Dispute Concerning Rhetoric in Hellenistic Thought* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010) argues that from Arcesilaus or Carneades onwards, there was a philosophically-motivated rehabilitation of rhetoric within the Academy (36f. and references there).

28 Olympiodorus *In Plat. Gorg.* 1,13; 33,2–3; 41,11. See also *Olympiodorus: Commentary on Plato's* Gorgias*, translated with full notes*, ed. Robin Jackson, Harold Tarrant, and Kimon Lycos (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 17–20. Obviously, Olympiodorus's scheme owes much to Plato's *Statesman,* esp. 303e–304e, but it is noteworthy that whereas in Plato there is considerable hesitation over whether in fact rule by an ideal statesman is a real practical possibility, this seems in Olympiodorus to have become a genuinely viable option.

with Aristotle and Cicero against them on the interpretation of the *Gorgias* regarding Socrates' policy on public speechmaking.

11 Conclusion

This paper has defended a view that has gone surprisingly unarticulated in the scholarship on Plato's *Gorgias* – the view that Socrates in the *Gorgias* maintains the same stance towards rhetoric as the Socrates of Plato's *Apology,* i.e. wholesale rejection of rhetoric, and the championing in its place of philosophical conversation. Although in the *Gorgias,* the life and activity championed by Socrates is called "true politics" and, by implication, "good rhetoric", what is being recommended is nothing like what would (then or now) be ordinarily recognised as rhetoric or political activity. As in the *Apology*, the claim is that this kind of philosophical conversation is in fact the best civic contribution a person can make, and the best deployment of speeches (λόγοι). This interpretation is unsurprising, since it simply mirrors what is clearly Socrates' position in the *Apology,* and what is clearly his way of life set out throughout the *Gorgias* itself. Perhaps it is little more than a statement of the obvious. But insofar as the question of what Socrates' "true politics" involves has even been considered in the scholarship, it has often been assumed instead to be some purified but recognisable form of political, public advocacy. This, I contend, is a mistake, and I urge a return to the simpler, more common-sense view.

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CHAPTER 4

The Purpose of Rhetorical Form in Plato

Tushar Irani

Abstract

This paper explores Plato's views on the purpose of rhetorical form by surveying the way in which Socrates engages in speechmaking at several points in the *Gorgias*. I argue that Socrates has nothing in principle against the use of a long speech as part of the practice of philosophical inquiry and argument, provided that the speech is geared toward understanding. This reflects a key and relatively unremarked distinction that Socrates makes in the *Gorgias* between persuasion that comes from being convinced and persuasion that comes from being taught. The kind of long speeches that Socrates objects to are those that have a conviction-based purpose. However, this leaves open the use of a wide variety of rhetorical techniques – pieces of argument, speechifying, analogy, myth, and exhortation – that have a teaching-based purpose, which is precisely the sort of rhetoric that Socrates licenses in the dialogue.

Keywords

philosophy – rhetoric – speechmaking – persuasion – conviction – teaching

1 Introduction[1]

I have elsewhere addressed the issue of Socrates's missing "great speech" in Plato's *Gorgias*, a speech in defense of philosophy that would serve as a response to Callicles's disparagement of the philosophical life at 482c–486d.[2] In that paper, I argue that a close reading of the dialectical moves that occur in

1 My thanks to Filip Karfík and Jakub Jirsa for an invitation to present at *Twelfth Symposium Platonicum Pragense on Plato's Gorgias* held in Prague in November 2019, and to all the participants of the event for the high level of discussion that served as an impulse to write this paper. I'm also especially grateful for feedback and comments from Vladimír Mikeš and the anonymous readers for Brill's Plato Studies Series.

2 Tushar Irani, "Socrates's Great Speech: The Defense of Philosophy in Plato's *Gorgias*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 59 (2021): 349–69.

the dialogue after Callicles's speech provides us with most of the core points that would be the essence of a speech that Socrates could give Callicles in defense of the life of philosophy.

In this paper I consider a broader question by examining the use of speechmaking generally in the *Gorgias*. While the essence of Socrates's response to Callicles's speech can be pieced together from their subsequent exchanges in the text, it remains the case that Plato deliberately does not have Socrates deliver this response in a speech comparable in form to the one produced by Callicles, though he provides many cues in the text that such a speech will be forthcoming (see 500c1–8, 505c7–d7, 506b4–c1). Why, then, do we not find Socrates's own great speech anywhere in the *Gorgias*? This absence is especially striking since in other dialogues Socrates often has no hesitation in giving long speeches.

An easy answer to this question draws on Socrates's two comments to Gorgias and Polus at 449b4–c6 and 461c8–462a5, where he expresses his distaste for long speechmaking and his preference for the considered kind of exchange that occurs through back-and-forth dialectic with an interlocutor. And yet Socrates is quite willing to produce a lengthy speech of his own at various stages in the *Gorgias*: the point is emphasised especially at 464b–465d, 517b–519d, and 523a–527c. So either Socrates is guilty of inconsistency at these stages in the text or his aversion to speechmaking is not absolute and can be outweighed by other considerations in select circumstances. I argue in this paper that the latter is the case and that a closer inspection of how, when, and why Socrates delivers long speeches in the dialogue explains his reluctance to do so in defending the life of philosophy against Callicles.[3]

I shall proceed, first, by surveying those parts of the *Gorgias* where Plato draws our attention to Socrates's attitude towards speechmaking before explaining, next, why a lengthy speech in defense of the philosophical life would be inapt as a response to Callicles. Briefly put, there are reasons *internal* to the text concerning Socrates's engagement with Callicles as well as reasons

3 My interest here is in the use of speechmaking generally in Plato, though my argument has a natural affinity with recent work that takes seriously his use of myths in the dialogues: see *Plato's Myths*, ed. C. Partenie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Daniel Werner, *Myth and Philosophy in Plato's Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); *Plato and Myth: Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myths,* eds. C. Collobert, P. Destrée, and F. Gonzalez (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Tae-Yeoun Kim, *Plato and the Mythic Tradition in Political Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020); and Katharine O'Reilly, "Jars, Sieves and Souls: The Myth of the Water Carriers in *Gorgias* 492–3," forthcoming in *Plato's Pleasures: New Perspectives*, ed. Joachim Aufderheide and Mehmet Erginel (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

external to the text concerning Plato's engagement with his reader that require a careful analysis of Callicles's views. It is only by exploring the assumptions that underlie his conception of the good life that Callicles can see the flaws in his own position, and in doing so Socrates engages Callicles in a persuasive endeavor that would be poorly served by a single speech. Even so, Socrates uses a range of rhetorical techniques (including sustained speechmaking) that together build a cumulative case throughout the *Gorgias* for the choiceworthiness of the philosophical life. Callicles himself remains unyielding throughout the dialogue in refusing to accept the benefits of the life of philosophy, but by having Socrates systematically dismantle Callicles's approach to the good life – through argument and through speechmaking – Plato leaves us in a position to affirm what Callicles cannot.

Through showing rather than telling Callicles that his views are flawed, and by constructing a case piece by piece in the *Gorgias* for the philosophical life, I suggest that Socrates engages Callicles (and Plato engages us) in a form of teaching. This reflects a distinction Socrates draws early in the dialogue at 453d–455a between persuasion that comes from being convinced (πιστευτικῆς) and persuasion that comes from being taught (διδασκαλικῆς). While the former has flattery and gratification as its aim, teaching-based persuasion has the aim of enlisting our understanding. However, nothing that Socrates says here or anywhere in the *Gorgias* confines the use of teaching-based persuasion to dialectic or any other particular form of discourse. Instead, Plato leaves open the possibility that long speeches may also promote the goals of teaching and learning when strategically employed, and this is precisely what we find in the dialogue. Such an inquiry thus sheds significant light on Plato's views on the use of speechmaking in general, where what matters to him ultimately is less the exact form of a piece of discourse and more its conduciveness to understanding.

2 Under What Conditions Is Speechmaking Warranted?

The most tempting way to address Plato's views on the use of speechmaking in the *Gorgias*, especially in relation to his conception of philosophy, is in terms of binaries: rhetoric versus dialectic; long speeches versus short speeches; flashy oratory versus sober-minded discussion. Such binaries seem to be supported by Socrates's remarks early in the text about how he wishes to engage his interlocutors in argument. From the start at 447a–b, we learn that Socrates has missed a dazzling display speech (ἐπίδειξις) delivered by Gorgias and there is good reason to think his late arrival is intentional: Socrates says he has come

not to listen to such speeches but to take part in discussion (διαλέγεσθαι). Soon after at 448d, he admonishes Polus for engaging in "what is called rhetoric" (τὴν καλουμένην ῥητορικήν) rather than discussion (διαλέγεσθαι), and when he begins his exchange with Gorgias at 449b–c he lays down some ground rules by asking Gorgias to refrain from speechmaking (τὸ … μῆκος τῶν λόγων) and to participate instead in the short give and take of dialogue.[4] The same rules are affirmed later at 461d–462a where the one request Socrates makes of Polus before they engage with each other is that Polus desist from making long speeches (μακρολογία).

Importantly, however, when Callicles delivers his great speech at 482c–486d – an elaborate and sustained piece of rhetoric unlike any other in the Platonic dialogues – Socrates does not fault the speech for its extravagant length. Here is his immediate reaction to the speech and the exchange with Callicles that follows:

> Socrates: If I actually had a soul made of gold, Callicles, don't you think I'd be pleased to find one of those stones on which they test (βασανίζουσιν) gold? And if this stone to which I intended to take my soul were the best stone and it agreed that my soul had been well cared for (καλῶς τεθεραπεῦσθαι), don't you think I could know well at that point that I'm in good shape and need no further test (βασάνου)?
>
> Callicles: What's the point of your question, Socrates?
>
> Socrates: I'll tell you. I believe that by running into you, I've run into just such a piece of luck.
>
> Callicles: Why do you say that?
>
> Socrates: I know well that if you concur with what my soul believes, then that is the very truth (τἀληθῆ). I realize that a person who is going to put a soul to an adequate test (βασανιεῖν ἱκανῶς) to see whether it lives rightly or not (πέρι ὀρθῶς τε ζώσης καὶ μή) must have three qualities, all of which you have: knowledge, good will, and frankness. (486d2–487a3)

Neither here nor at any stage in their conversation does Socrates take issue with the length of Callicles's speech. On the contrary, he seems delighted with

4 All quotes from the *Gorgias* in this paper follow Donald Zeyl's translation in *Plato: Complete Works*, eds. J. M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), with minor modifications in places. References to the Greek are based on *Platonis opera*, ed. John Burnet (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900–7).

it, noting that the speech evinces Callicles's knowledge, good will, and frankness: qualities that are indispensable in an ideal interlocutor.[5] This is especially surprising given the unmistakable scorn that Callicles displays in his speech for Socrates's chosen vocation as a philosopher. In no other dialogue do we see a character express greater contempt for the practice of philosophy and Socrates's pursuit of it as a way of life. Yet rather than take offence, Socrates singles out this line of criticism in the speech as particularly commendable:

> And most admirable of all (πάντων δὲ καλλίστη), Callicles, is the examination (σκέψις) of those issues concerning which you took me to task, that of what a man must be like (ποῖόν τινα χρὴ εἶναι τὸν ἄνδρα), and of what he must pursue (τί ἐπιτηδεύειν) and how far (μέχρι τοῦ), when he's older and when he's young. (487e7–488a2)

Now, one might read these remarks as insincere or ironic: the standard refuge of those who find it baffling when Plato has Socrates respond to hostility with decency. Yet this dismissal of the praise that Socrates heaps on Callicles's speech fails to do justice to the content of the piece. Callicles's speech is not a work of high-flown oratory of the sort that Polus attempts (and Socrates rightly censures) in extolling the practice of rhetoric earlier in the text at 448c4–9, but a finely wrought and well-thought-out case for choosing the rhetorical life over the philosophical life.[6] It is no stretch when Socrates calls the speech an "examination" (σκέψις, 487e8) of the kind of life one should live, for Callicles's advocacy of the rhetorical life is based on a theory of human nature and our relations with others that leads quite plausibly to the need for rhetoric in democratic politics.

That is to say, Socrates sees that Callicles's speech is based on *reasons*. The doctrine of natural justice that Callicles develops in the first part of the speech

5 This evidence is no doubt provisional, since Callicles eventually in the dialogue falls short of an ideal interlocutor. As Socrates puts it later in the text: "I didn't suppose at the beginning that I'd be deceived intentionally by you, because I assumed you were a friend" (499c2–4). For discussion, see Richard McKim, "Shame and Truth in Plato's *Gorgias*," in *Platonic Writings, Platonic Readings*, ed. Charles Griswold (London: Routledge, 1988), 40; Marina McCoy, *Plato on the Rhetoric of Philosophers and Sophists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 103–6; Franco Trivigno, "Paratragedy in Plato's *Gorgias*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 36 (2009): 95–6.

6 For a similar contrast, see Socrates's criticism of Agathon's speech on love in the *Symposium* at 198b1–199b5 versus the more favorable attitude he displays toward Diotima's speech. Of course, the fact that Socrates holds Callicles's speech in higher regard than Polus's speech does not preclude the need for Callicles's views to be examined. Still, the point remains that Socrates has no objection here to the use of speechmaking *per se*.

is sophisticated, and he appeals to it both as a justification for the claims he advances in the second part of the speech to assert the choiceworthiness of the rhetorical life and as an explanation of Polus's failure to argue for that thesis against Socrates (see 482d7–483b4). Callicles's speech, we can say, is geared towards understanding. It shows Socrates how one might argue cogently for the benefits of the life of rhetoric without having to invoke tendentiously, as Polus does, a glamorized portrait of the tyrant or the horrors of torture (see 470c4–471d2, 473b12–d2). This is why a discussion with Callicles will be the best test of whether and how well Socrates has managed to care for his soul (καλῶς τεθεραπεῦσθαι, 486d5–6). For Socrates realizes that, unlike Gorgias and Polus, Callicles's views are grounded in principles that suggest a conception of the good life standing in direct opposition to his own. Callicles is a genuine touchstone for Socrates in the sense that, if either of their views fail to survive critical scrutiny, Socrates will have a better understanding of what living well consists in. Seen in this light, the exact form of Callicles's speech is irrelevant. Despite its status as an elaborate piece of rhetoric, Socrates values it as a piece of thinking.

2.1 *The Pastry-Baking Analogy*

This way of approaching the purpose of rhetorical form in the *Gorgias* helps us make sense of four other cases in the text where Socrates licenses the use of speechmaking; or at least, he has no objection to its use, since on each occasion Socrates himself delivers the speech. The first is his pastry-baking analogy at 464b–465d and is the most straightforward case. In this analogy, Socrates takes issue with the way his contemporaries conventionally engage in rhetoric by comparing their practice with the practice of pastry-baking: in the same way that a pastry-baker caters only to what a customer finds most pleasant to eat, so a conventional rhetorician caters only to what an audience finds most pleasant to hear. On this basis, Socrates holds, practitioners of rhetoric like Gorgias and Polus should be understood as possessing not an art, but a mere knack for flattering the appetites of their listeners.[7]

This summary captures Socrates's main point in the pastry-baking analogy, though the entire stretch of text (spanning about one-and-a-half Stephanus pages) contains a complex comparison of a wide range of pursuits, including

7 This reading of the analogy is explored further by Raphael Woolf, "Why is Rhetoric Not a Skill?," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 21 (2004): 119–30; Jessica Moss, "The Doctor and the Pastry Chef: Pleasure and Persuasion in Plato's *Gorgias*," *Ancient Philosophy* 27 (2007): 229–49; and Tushar Irani, *Plato on the Value of Philosophy: The Art of Argument in the* Gorgias *and* Phaedrus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 49–52.

cosmetics, gymnastics, medicine, sophistry, legislation, and justice. Socrates also identifies what he calls the "art of politics" (ἡ πολιτική) with the care of the soul in this part of the dialogue (464a1–c4). This claim relies crucially on a distinction he establishes between the goods of the body and the goods of soul, and its implications recur throughout the *Gorgias*. Indeed, in many ways the pastry-baking analogy contains material that is key to the development of Socrates's views later in the dialogue. As we shall have occasion to observe often in this paper, several of the ideas first introduced in the analogy are referenced well into Socrates's discussion with Callicles (see esp. 500e4–501c5, 502d10–503d3, 504d5–e3, 513d1–514a3, 517c7–518a5).

More than this, however, the pastry-baking analogy shows that Socrates is quite amenable to producing an elaborate speech of his own when he believes it necessary. Although the analogy falls short of logical rigour, Socrates tells Gorgias and Polus before the speech that it will display (ἐπιδείξω, 464b2) to them how he regards the conventional practice of rhetoric. But why is speechmaking warranted in this case? Socrates offers a justification to Polus directly after developing the analogy:

> Perhaps I've done a strange thing (ἄτοπον): I wouldn't let you make long speeches (μακροὺς λόγους), and here I've just composed a lengthy one myself. I deserve to be forgiven, though, for when I made my statements short (βραχέα) *you didn't understand* (οὐκ ἐμάνθανες) and didn't know how to deal with the answers I gave you, but you needed a narration (διηγήσεως). So if I don't know how to deal with your answers either, you must spin out a speech too. (465e1–466a2) (emphasis added)

Socrates here expresses his willingness to engage in speechmaking as well as an openness to listening to a long speech when delivered in the service of understanding. The length of the pastry-baking analogy is justified because when he first describes the conventional practice of rhetoric as "an image of a part of politics" (πολιτικῆς μορίου εἴδωλον, 463d2), neither Gorgias nor Polus understand his view. Socrates hence gives the speech for the purposes of clarification (463d4–e4).[8] Having a view of something in this sense is a kind of achievement, one based on reasons, and the understanding Socrates seeks from his audience requires that they grasp those reasons: he wants them to understand his view, as it were, from the inside. The pastry-baking analogy clarifies why

8 See Gabriela Roxana Carone, "Socratic Rhetoric in the *Gorgias*," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 35 (2005): 228, who also observes Socrates' positive attitude toward speechmaking for such purposes.

Socrates calls rhetoric an image of a part of politics in just this way. By focusing on what's most pleasant (ἡδίστῳ, 464d2) instead of what's best (βελτίστου, 464d1), the conventional practice of rhetoric is an image of a pursuit that benefits the human soul in the same way that pastry-baking is an image of a pursuit that benefits the human body.

2.2 *The Water-Carriers Myth*

The second use of speechmaking that I wish to highlight from the *Gorgias* is the myth of the water carriers that Socrates puts forward early in his conversation with Callicles at 492e–494a.[9] Socrates appeals to the myth after a particularly heated moment in the text at 491e–492c, where Callicles advocates a view of the good life as a life of unconstrained desire fulfillment. This hedonistic view of human happiness emerges after a section of dialogue at 488b–491e during which Socrates questions the notion of the superior man whom Callicles had championed earlier in his great speech, and the water-carriers myth continues the same line of inquiry. We can see this more easily by arranging these parts of the text in sequence:

1. Callicles's great speech (482c–486d)
2. Socrates cross-examines Callicles about the "superior man" (488b–491e)
3. Callicles's promotion of hedonism (491e–492c)
4. Socrates's water-carriers myth (492e–494a)

Together, Socrates's cross-examination of Callicles in (2) and his use of myth in (4) are both attempts to get Callicles to clarify the view of the good life he assumes in (1). The fact that one attempt takes the form of dialectic and the other the form of a long speech is irrelevant. Socrates makes this evident in responding to Callicles's outburst after (3) by asking him "not to relax in any way, so that it may really become clear (κατάδηλον) how we should live (πῶς βιωτέον)" (492d3–5). He develops the water-carriers myth at 492e–494a – a speech that pointedly makes use of figurative reasoning (εἰκόνα, 493d5) rather than deductive argument – for this very purpose.

Notice, too, how Socrates relates the myth by first describing it in one way at 492e7–493d3 and then reworking it slightly at 493d5–494a5.[10] In the first version, he likens the soul of the insatiable man with unconstrained desires to a leaky sieve constantly having to refill a leaky jar with water. Socrates admits that this story is quite strange (τι ἄτοπα), but having presented it (ἐνδειξάμενος) he

9 My thanks to Filip Karfík for emphasising to me the importance of the water-carriers myth to Socrates's conversation with Callicles, particularly in relation to their opposing conceptions of the good life.

10 This point has received excellent treatment recently by O'Reilly, "Jars, Sieves and Souls."

hopes it will nonetheless make clear (δηλοῖ) for Callicles by allegorical means the benefits of an orderly life compared with an undisciplined life (493c3–7). In the second version of the myth, Socrates more directly compares the orderly life with the undisciplined life, though still by means of an allegory. The former life is likened to a man who possesses secure jars: after filling them with various substances, this man rests content and does not concern himself with replenishing them further. The latter life, however, is likened to a man with rotten jars, who is "forced to keep on filling them, day and night, or else he suffers extreme pain" (493e8–a1). After depicting each life in the myth, Socrates has the following exchange with Callicles:

Socrates: Now since each life is the way I describe it, are you saying that the life of the undisciplined man is happier than that of the orderly man? When I say this, do I at all persuade you to concede that the orderly life is better than the undisciplined one, or do I not?

Callicles: You do not, Socrates. The man who has filled himself up has no pleasure any more, and when he's been filled up and experiences neither joy nor pain, that's living like a stone, as I was saying just now. Rather, living pleasantly (τὸ ἡδέως ζῆν) consists in this: having as much as possible flow in (ἐν τῷ ὡς πλεῖστον ἐπιρρεῖν). (494a2–b2)

I noted above that having a view of something is a kind of achievement according to Socrates, and this is exactly the outcome of his use of the water-carriers myth. In this case, however, it is not (as in the pastry-baking analogy) Socrates's position that gets clarified, but Callicles's position. To understand Callicles's approach to the good life, Socrates wants to grasp the presuppositions that motivate it and the implications it leads to: he wants to understand Callicles's view, as I put it earlier, from the inside. The myth does this by getting Callicles to sharpen his identification of the good life with the pleasant life. What "living pleasantly" amounts to, for Callicles, is the greatest possible experience of sensory pleasure. Callicles grants that such a life may entail pain or discomfort, but insists that the man with satisfied desires or "full jars" in the myth no longer experiences pleasure and thus, on his view, does not qualify as living a good life.

Read in this light, Socrates's use of the water-carriers myth accomplishes in a brief space what his cross-examination of Callicles at 488b–491e does not. Once Callicles affirms a view of happiness as a life devoted to the maximal gratification of one's desires, Socrates sees he has his work cut out for him. For

a consequence of Callicles's view is that it locates human virtue or excellence in the power to enlarge and satisfy one's desires to the greatest extent possible. There were intimations of this idea already in the *Gorgias* (see 491e8–9, 492c4–6, d5-e1) but the myth makes it plain how Callicles will reject any understanding of the human good that requires the imposition of a limit or "orderliness" on human desires. From this point on, Socrates marshals a series of arguments designed to refute the thesis that what's good for a human being is reducible to what's pleasant. Here he reverts to his usual method of questioning and testing the consistency of his interlocutor's views until 499b–d, where Callicles finally retracts the claim that all pleasures are equally good for a human being. Yet it is the use of the myth at 492e–494a that leads Callicles to put that position on the table.

2.3 *Socrates's Critique of Earlier Politicians in Athens*

Socrates's critique of former Athenian politicians at 517b–519d is a third instance in which he delivers a long speech in the *Gorgias*. As in the pastry-baking analogy, this is another place in the text where Socrates engages in speechmaking to clarify his views. In fact, he draws on the analogy substantially (see 517c7–518a5), expanding on it to develop a new objection to the conventional practice of rhetoric. The question at issue here concerns how the use of rhetoric conduces to the good of a wider political community. Socrates contends that earlier political leaders in Athens – he lists in particular Cimon, Themistocles, Miltiades, and Pericles – did nothing that really benefited the Athenian people with their oratory. Rather, just as what counts for success in pastry-baking, these politicians succeeded only in indulging the appetites of the people, "for they filled the city with harbors and dockyards, walls, and tribute payments and such trash as that, but did so without justice and moderation" (519a1–4).

Socrates then comments on the absurdity of a purportedly just leader resenting being treated unjustly by his city. For a just politician skilled in rhetoric, Socrates holds, must make those over whom he exercises his rhetoric just. If the people turn out to be unjust, then the fault lies with the politician (519b8–c2). Whatever we think of his reasoning, Socrates makes it clear that he advances this critique to explain why he believes no preeminent politician before him possessed any genuine political expertise.[11] And the rationale for this belief should be familiar to us by now: all of these politicians engaged in rhetoric merely as a form of flattery, reducing what was good for the Athenian

11 For a fuller discussion of Socrates's views in this part of the *Gorgias*, see J. Clerk Shaw, "Socrates and the True Political Craft," *Classical Philology* 106 (2011): 187–207.

people to what was most pleasant for them to hear. But that is a false view of the human good, as Callicles has admitted by this stage in the text. Socrates has no reservations here in abandoning dialectic, recalling many tropes and ideas from earlier in the dialogue, and he admits his loquaciousness freely when Callicles highlights the point (see 519d8–e2), yet he does so to bring home to Callicles the consequences of their previous agreements.[12] Again, this is a speech delivered in the service of understanding.

2.4 *The Concluding Eschatological Myth*

My final example of Socrates's use of speechmaking in the *Gorgias* comes from the last part of the dialogue, where he spends over four Stephanus pages relating an eschatological myth at 523a–527c. This stretch of the dialogue is the longest case of unbroken oratory in the text and a full treatment of the myth lies beyond the scope of this paper. For our purposes, two points stand out as worthy of attention. The first concerns the plainly allegorical content of the myth and its use by Socrates to elucidate a claim he makes at 521d–e, where he asserts that he alone among all of his contemporaries and most of his predecessors practices the true art of politics (ἀληθῶς πολιτικῇ τέχνῃ, 521d7). The second (related) point concerns Socrates's introduction of the myth at 523a1–3, where he insists that the story should be interpreted as a *logos* instead of a *mythos*.

The allegorical content of the concluding myth in the *Gorgias* has received excellent discussion by David Sedley, who identifies several echoes of key themes and arguments from earlier in the dialogue in the story.[13] As Sedley observes, and as we have also seen, the idea that figurative language can be used to clarify moral truths is already signalled at 493c3–7 in the myth of the water carriers.[14] Most notable of all in the myth at 523a–527c is the theme of punishment and the sense in which Plato conceives of Socratic refutation as a corrective form of punishment administered to improve an interlocutor's soul. The myth thus serves in the text to reinforce Socrates's claim to be the best practitioner of politics in Athens. It follows naturally from his critique of

12 Note in particular 517d5–6, where Socrates justifies his use of images as an aid for Callicles to understand his argument (διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν εἰκόνων λέγω, ἵνα ῥᾷον καταμάθῃς).

13 David Sedley, "Myth, Punishment and Politics in the *Gorgias*," in *Plato's Myths*, ed. Catalin Partenie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). See also Radcliffe G. Edmonds, "Whip Scars on the Naked Soul: Myth and Elenchos in Plato's *Gorgias*," in *Plato and Myth*, ed. Catherine Collobert, Pierre Destrée, and Francisco J. Gonzalez (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 165–85.

14 Sedley, "Myth," 53.

earlier Athenian politicians at 517b–519d while drawing on ideas he develops in the pastry-baking analogy at 464b–465d concerning the art of politics.

This helps us see why Socrates regards the concluding myth primarily as a *logos*. Sedley claims that the designation of the myth as a *logos* refers to its true content, though he acknowledges that its figurative nature leaves open what exactly that content is.[15] In fact, it is not clear that an analysis of the myth in terms of its truth value is the best approach to adopt in interpreting its significance, especially if Socrates's description of the soul's survival after death should not be read as literally true. How does one go about assessing the truth of an allegory? If the myth is put forward as an account of Socrates's practice of refutation as a beneficial form of punishment, then it would be otiose for its status as a *logos* to consist in the truth of that account. For Socrates has already affirmed this truth elsewhere in the text and believes he has demonstrated it repeatedly during his exchanges with Polus and Callicles (see 475d6–7, 505a6–b12, 505c3–4, 521e2–522c2).[16]

Instead, the myth should be read as operating on a different explanatory level as an elaboration on how Socratic refutation benefits the soul of an interlocutor. That is to say, the myth should be read as *deepening* our understanding of Socrates's claim to be an expert in politics, rather than as a statement of that claim's truth value. It does so by bringing together a series of supporting claims that Socrates has advanced in the dialogue concerning the nature of the human good and the nature of human virtue. And it does so, importantly, without relying on explicit argument. When interpreted alongside earlier parts of the *Gorgias*, the myth functions as another piece of Socrates's cumulative case in the dialogue for the practice of philosophy and its contribution to the care of the soul. This is most apparent from the conclusion at 527a5–c4, where Socrates folds the story into a group of theses he has advanced throughout the text. Sedley notes that Socrates regards this package of findings as "so

15 Sedley, "Myth," 52, 68, n. 29. Christopher Rowe likewise believes that the myth's status as a *logos* consists in it being a "true account or report," though he argues for a two-level reading of the content of the myth on which we are meant to see through the conventional (and false) notion of punishment in the story and grasp the view of punishment that Socrates puts forward as true. Ch. Rowe, "The Status of the Myth of the *Gorgias*, or: Taking Plato Seriously," in *Plato and Myth. Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myths*, eds. Catherine Collobert, Pierre Destrée, and Francisco J. Gonzales (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 190–1.

16 The idea of Socratic refutation as a kind of punishment and its implications for Plato in the *Gorgias* receives close discussion in Gabriela Roxana Carone, "Calculating Machines or Leaky Jars? The Moral Psychology of Plato's *Gorgias*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 26 (2004): 55–96. See also the chapter by Louis-André Dorion in this volume.

integral a unity that they jointly constitute a single *logos*."[17] That is correct, yet what this single *logos* amounts to for Socrates is a long-drawn-out defense of the philosophical life: observe how in the last lines of the *Gorgias*, he reasserts the way the dialogue has disclosed one *logos* to him and his interlocutors, an account of the best way of life (ὁ τρόπος ἄριστος τοῦ βίου, 527e3). Socrates goes on to affirm the advantages of this *logos* over Callicles's endorsement of the rhetorical life in the text (see 527e5–7), which can only mean that by the end of the *Gorgias* Socrates believes he has answered the challenge to justify the practice of philosophy. The myth at 523a–527c adds one more dimension to that defense. Its status as a *logos* consists not in its truth value but in how it supplements the longer *logos* on behalf of the philosophical life that Plato has had Socrates construct carefully throughout the dialogue.

3 The Form of Socrates's Defense of Philosophy

Let us return now to the question with which I began this paper. As we have seen, Socrates has nothing in principle against engaging in long speechmaking in the *Gorgias* provided that it serves the ends of clarification and understanding. This is in contrast to the use of rhetoric he associates with the practice of his contemporaries, who engage in speechmaking for the purposes of flattery and gratification. In each of the cases we have surveyed, Socrates makes a long speech either to elaborate on the reasons for his own views or to develop a better grasp of his interlocutors' views. Indeed, despite the combative tenor of Callicles's great speech, Socrates values the way in which the piece helps him understand Callicles's position.

This makes it all the more perplexing why Socrates refrains from defending the life of philosophy in a way that's comparable in form to Callicles's great speech. And yet the answer should be clear at this point: if Socrates chooses not to produce such a speech, it must be because he believes it would not promote the goal of understanding his conception of the good life.

Why is this? The fact that Socrates effectively has two audiences seems relevant here. On the one hand, within the drama of the *Gorgias*, Callicles needs to recognize that despite the persuasiveness of his doctrine of natural justice and the attractiveness of the rewards that rhetoric can provide in democratic politics, there are various problems with the theory of human nature and human excellence on which his conception of the good life depends. It is only

17 Sedley, "Myth," 53, n. 4.

in the absence of this theory that Socrates's own position has any traction. On the other hand, outside the drama of the *Gorgias*, Plato wants us to see that, for all the allure of Callicles's idea of the strong man who shakes off the restraints of the masses and furthers his own interests by disregarding custom and convention, there are flaws at the heart of Callicles's position that imply the value of the philosophical life over the rhetorical life. Callicles himself is not prepared to accept this inference by the end of the dialogue, but we are clearly meant to draw it.[18]

Disabusing Callicles of his reasons for championing the life of rhetoric and explicating these flaws for us requires that Socrates call attention to the fragility of Callicles's doctrine of natural justice and his notion of the superior man. This is not something he can achieve in a prolonged speech. For suppose that Socrates *did* deliver a lengthy display speech in response to Callicles that championed the life of philosophy. Such a speech would come at the cost of the work he achieves in excavating Callicles's position at 488b–491e and 491e–492c, and in the water-carriers myth at 492e–494a. It would also rule out the systematic refutation of Callicles's hedonism subsequently in the text. We would be presented instead with the juxtaposition of two theories of the good life in competition with each other, a pair of opposing set pieces where the choice between them would reduce simply to a matter of preference between the goods of the rhetorical life versus the goods of the philosophical life. But conceiving of the choice between these ways of life in these terms misses exactly what Socrates wants to underscore in the *Gorgias*: by itself, the power that the conventional practice of rhetoric provides is no good for us at all – structuring our lives around this pursuit would deprive us of what we hold "most dear" (φιλτάτοις, 513a6) – whereas the power that one acquires by engaging in philosophy, wisdom, is the only good we need.

From this, it is tempting to infer that philosophical inquiry for Socrates must always be conducted through the back-and-forth of dialectic and the careful analysis of an interlocutor's views. Yet this does not follow. Refutation typically requires elenctic discussion, but before that Socrates must get his interlocutor's and his own views adequately on the table. For such inquiry, there is nothing that makes the form of a long speech unsuitable for Socrates's aims. In fact, we have seen how Socrates's use of the water-carriers myth proves more suitable than his characteristic method of cross-examination in getting Callicles to articulate his understanding of the good life and sharpen his sense of what human virtue is. Protracted rhetoric of the sort we see here and elsewhere

18 The implication is clear from the last lines of the dialogue, though it is equally clear that Callicles is some way off from accepting it: see 527a5–8.

in the *Gorgias* can serve the ends of philosophy just as well as dialectic. The question is how, at what stage, and for what purpose such speechmaking is deployed.

This use of speechmaking supports a distinction Socrates draws between two kinds of persuasion early in the dialogue with Gorgias. The first, employed for instance by an arithmetician, is the kind of persuasion that occurs through being taught (διδασκαλικῆς, 455a1, see also 453d7–e3); the second is the kind that occurs through being convinced (πιστευτικῆς, 455a1). This distinction plays a key role in Gorgias's efforts to define the nature of rhetoric (see esp. 458e6–a1) but once he affirms that a conventional rhetorician concerns himself only with producing conviction in an audience, the possibility of a kind of persuasion that has teaching or (as Socrates also puts it) learning (μάθησις, 454d2) or knowledge (ἐπιστήμη, 454e4; εἰδέναι, 454e4) as its aim is left undeveloped in the text and has not, as far as I am aware, received much attention by scholars.

My suggestion in this paper is that Socrates's use of long speechmaking in the *Gorgias* conforms to teaching-based persuasion rather than persuasion aimed at mere conviction. For we have found that he generally engages in speechmaking to clarify either the reasons he has for his own views or the reasons his interlocutors have for theirs. Notice that after he relates the water-carriers myth, Socrates openly expresses his interest in persuading Callicles about the disadvantages of a life committed to the endless satisfaction of one's desires: "When I say this," he asks Callicles, "do I at all persuade (πείθω) you to concede that the orderly life is better than the undisciplined one, or do I not?" (494a3–5). Callicles does not concede, but a consequence of the water-carriers myth is that it puts him in a better state to understand his own position. That is, the myth prompts Callicles to consider *what it is he means* in identifying the happy life with the pleasant life, and thus what benefit he believes the practice of rhetoric confers in living well.

The import of this last point bears stressing. We saw in the previous section how Socrates admires Callicles's great speech for the sophistication of its thinking. A key result of the discussion that follows in the text – consisting of pieces of argument, speechifying, analogy, myth, and exhortation – is that it deepens Callicles's thinking, enabling him to form a sense of the internal workings of his own commitments. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Callicles thereby learns something about himself, to the extent that he reflects more carefully on his convictions about the good life. This is one example of the way Socrates's use of different rhetorical devices has a teaching function that benefits his interlocutors. A response to Callicles's speech that consisted only of a competing speech of Socrates's own would fail to accomplish such an excavation of Callicles's commitments.

Ultimately in the *Gorgias*, we learn that the life of rhetoric amounts to the life of a flatterer, equipping an aspiring politician with the power to satisfy his desires at the expense of others or to protect himself from the predations of others. Callicles concedes this point late in the text at 521b1–3. His speech at 482c–486d never makes explicit the notions of human excellence that motivate his promotion of the rhetorical life. It takes dialectic but also a considerable use of speechmaking for Socrates to draw out these unspoken features of Callicles's position. He does so by extracting from Callicles, first, the idea that virtue (ἀρετή) lies in "the filling up of desires (τὸ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας ἀποπιμπλάναι)" (503c5; see also 492c3–6, 492d5–e1) and, second, the idea that "preserving oneself and one's belongings (τὸ σῴζειν αὑτὸν καὶ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ ὄντα), no matter what sort of person one happens to be, is what virtue is (τοῦτ᾽ ἐστὶν ἀρετή)" (512d3–4). Once these justifications for the life of rhetoric have been examined and rejected, Socrates at last has the space to promote the life of philosophy.[19]

If this is right, we can see how well Callicles acts as a "touchstone" for Socrates's commitment to philosophy and a test for how he has cared for his soul, in just the way Plato has us anticipate at the start of their exchange. Recall Socrates's opening remark to Callicles: "if this stone to which I intended to take my soul were the best stone and it agreed that my soul had been well cared for (καλῶς τεθεραπεῦσθαι), don't you think I could know well at that point that I'm in good shape and need no further test?" (486d5–7). While Callicles never comes around to agreeing about the value of philosophy, he does provide Socrates with the agreements necessary to test the strength of their opposing commitments.[20]

So while Socrates eschews giving a speech that champions the philosophical life in the *Gorgias*, Plato encourages us to assemble the elements of that defense for ourselves from the stretches of conversation in the text where Socrates addresses Callicles's views and explicates his own. The use of rhetorical form figures in Socrates's engagement with his interlocutors only insofar as it promotes the goals of teaching and learning, and by adopting a "show rather than tell" strategy in conveying Socrates's defense of the philosophical life, Plato engages in the same kind of teaching-based persuasion with us.[21]

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19 I argue for this reading of Socrates's final exchange with Callicles in Irani, "Socrates's Great Speech."

20 For discussion of Callicles's intransigence, see Dominic Scott, "Platonic Pessimism and Moral Education," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 17 (1999): 15–36; Raphael Woolf, "Callicles and Socrates: Psychic (Dis)harmony in the *Gorgias*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 18 (2000): 1–40; and Irani, *Value of Philosophy*, 101–5.

21 Similar claims about teaching and learning as the proper ends of speechmaking can be found in the *Phaedrus* at 277e6–9 and 278a2–5.

The result is a reading experience where we achieve a deeper understanding of Socrates's position, an understanding that would be impossible in the absence of a thorough accounting of Callicles's position. Yet as we have found, this does not require the use of a single form of discourse in the dialogue. Rather, Socrates employs a variety of rhetorical techniques and all of them qualify as an active engagement in philosophical inquiry, for him and for us.

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PART 2

Psychology and Virtue

CHAPTER 5

Psychic Conflict and Intrinsic Value in the *Gorgias*

Naly Thaler

Abstract

The *Gorgias* is often taken to contain two distinct psychological theories. In the course of the conversation with Polus Socrates seems to subscribe to an "intellectualistic" theory that takes all desire for action as a manifestation of the agent's conception of the good. Yet during his conversation with Callicles Socrates acknowledges the existence of mental conflict and so seems to presuppose the existence of irrational, i.e. non-good-oriented, desires. In what follows I offer a new way of unifying the two sections. I argue that Socrates' later acknowledgment of possible conflict between the agent's desire for pleasure and her desire for an action she deems beneficial does not presuppose that the former is an irrational desire. In fact, Socrates' conversation with Callicles forces us to take the desire for pleasure as a manifestation of the agent's conception of the good. I argue that once the relevant notion of "the good" in play is properly understood, it becomes apparent that mental conflict is in principle compatible with a soul characterized solely by good-oriented desires. Yet it also becomes clear that such conflict can be fully avoided by acquiring the proper conception of the good.

Keywords

value – conflict – desire – pleasure – irrational

1 Introduction

The psychological theory underlying Plato's *Gorgias* has been notoriously difficult to come to grips with. The trouble stems from the fact that at different stages of the dialogue Socrates expresses what appear to be incompatible views about the nature of human motivation. Thus, while the conversations with Gorgias and Polus contain strong evidence for a strictly "intellectualist" theory of desire, according to which all desires are manifestations of the agent's conception of the good, the conversation with Callicles is replete with claims that seem to attest to a psychological theory that takes non-rational desires and,

specifically, the desire for pleasure, as a brute fact about the human soul.[1] The most notable instance of the first sort of theory is that which underlies the much discussed argument in *Grg.* 467c–468e that tyrants and orators do not do what they wish, even when they do whatever seems best to them. In the course of this argument, Socrates expresses a firm commitment to the idea that all our actions are performed for the sake of what we ultimately take to be good, a claim which seems to leave little room for the idea that some actions stem from a non-rational, i.e. non-good-oriented, locus of motivation. The second psychological theory is evidenced in the repeated recommendation to form a habit of curbing and chastising our desires so as to force them to comply with our notion of the good (505b–c, 507b–e). These latter remarks seem to presuppose a markedly different relation between the agent's conception of the good and the desires he experiences: rather than directly reflecting the agent's conception of the good, we must now conceive of some desires as arising independently of it, so that the agent's conception of the good functions not as a goal at which all desires are aimed, but (ideally) as a limit on when and how various desires ought to be indulged.

Scholars have suggested various ways to deal with this apparent inconsistency. One familiar solution is to take the *Gorgias* as a transitional dialogue, one whose earlier part reflects Socrates' (or Plato's early) fully intellectualist theory of motivation, according to which all human desires are manifestations of the agent's prudential judgment about what the best course of action for them is, yet whose later part shows traces of Plato's own (or his later) tripartite theory of the soul which famously acknowledges that some desires arise from non-rational loci in the psyche.[2] Others have argued for a unifying reading, claiming that Socrates' apparently conflicting claims about motivation are in fact fully compatible with each other. This, it is claimed, is because, unlike what is presupposed by more traditional interpretations of Socratic intellectualism, Socrates' (or Plato's "earlier") view of human motivation does not preclude

1 For the purpose of the discussion to follow, the idea of a "non-rational" motivation will be that of a desire that is independent of the agent's considered notion of the good, i.e. one which is not amenable to revision or reorientation following any sort of reconsideration by the agent of the identity of the good. Thus, the possible question of whether non-rational parts of the soul, such as those introduced in the *Republic*, actually conceive of their objects under the notion of the "good" is irrelevant for my purposes, since even if this were the case, this notion would still be rigid and unsusceptible to revision. While this is not the place to argue the point, it seems to me that the idea of a fully rigid conception of the good, one which is not based on any process of deliberation and is hence in principle immune to revision, is a contradiction in (Platonic) terms.

2 For this solution, see Terence Irwin, *Plato*: Gorgias, *Translated with Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 218.

the idea that the human psyche contains non-rational sources of motivation which are liable to stand in conflict with the agent's considered notion of the good.[3] The "intellectualist" character of this psychology, this revisionist reading suggests, stems only from the idea that such desires are, in themselves, insufficient for motivating action. This is because any intentional action (even one that accords with these desires) requires the agent's prudential judgment and consequent assent that it is best for them to act in that particular manner.[4]

In what follows I shall suggest a new way of dealing with Socrates' disparate claims about motivation in the *Gorgias*. As we saw, the current "unifying" interpretation of these claims holds that Socrates' acceptance of the possibility of psychic struggle and disharmony in the second part of the dialogue is indicative of his basic view of the human psyche, according to which the psyche contains non-rational loci of motivation which are liable to produce desires that conflict with the agent's beliefs about the good. In contrast to this, I shall argue that Socrates' claims about the need to practice self-control and his acceptance of the possibility of mental conflict are completely consistent with a fully rationalistic theory of desire, one which takes all the agent's desires to be reflections of his considered, and hence revisable, conception of the good. Yet, as I shall proceed to show, recognizing the congruity between a fully rationalistic psychology and the phenomenon of mental conflict requires us to alter our conception of the "good" which is definitive of the idea of a rational desire. In contrast to the underlying presupposition shared by both the traditional view of the tenets of Socratic intellectualism and the revisionist unifying reading, I shall argue that the relevant notion of the good is not that which features in an agent's prudential judgment concerning which course of action is all-things-considered most beneficial for her, but rather that which is embodied in her basic scheme of values.

3 For the "traditional" view see Terence Irwin, *Plato's Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 83–4; Terry Penner, "Desire and Power in Socrates: The Argument of 'Gorgias' 466A-468E that Orators and Tyrants Have No Power in the City," *Apeiron* 24,3 (1991): 147; Gregory Vlastos, "Introduction: The Paradox of Socrates," in *The Philosophy of Socrates: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Gregory Vlastos (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), 15–16.

4 This view of Socrates' psychology in the *Gorgias* was originally articulated by Daniel Devereux, "Socrates' Kantian conception of virtue," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 33,3 (1995): 381–408. He is followed, with some important revisions, by Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith, *Socratic Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), ch. 2 and 3, as well as by Naomi Reshotko, *Socratic Virtue: Making the Best of the Neither-Good-nor-Bad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), ch. 4.

2 The Argument from Intrinsic Value

My point of departure for attempting to question the popular "non-rationalist" construal of the desire for pleasure in the later part of the *Gorgias* (a construal which is common to both competing current interpretations) is Socrates' exchange with Callicles in 499b–500a. Let us begin by reminding ourselves of the context of the exchange: Socrates here presents an argument in response to Callicles' apparent change of heart regarding the status of pleasure: Callicles' original claim was that the attainment of pleasure is the sole human goal, and that the desire for it must remain unhindered by any external or internal constraints. Callicles was able to maintain this position throughout Socrates' various attacks on it, until the argument at 497e–499b which I shall refer to as the "Argument from Pleased Cowards" (henceforth APC). In the course of that argument, Socrates showed that it is inconsistent to claim that pleasure is the sole human good and to also hold, as Callicles seems to do, that some people are better than others in virtue of being wiser and braver.[5] If pleasure is the good then, assuming people become good by virtue of coming to have the good in them (491e1–3), it follows that cowardly soldiers become better than their courageous companions each time they come to feel (cowardly) pleasure at seeing the enemy flee from battle (499a7–b3). Following this argument Callicles retracts his original position and brazenly claims that all along his considered view had been that only some pleasures constitute the human good, and that others are in fact bad (499b6–8).

But it quickly turns out that Socrates has no trouble disposing of this newer version of Callicles' view of pleasure, using what I shall refer to as the "Argument from Intrinsic Value" (henceforth AIV). He begins by securing Callicles' assent to the claim that:

> (1) "good" pleasures are beneficial ones, i.e. those that are conducive to certain desired states such as health or strength, whereas "bad" pleasures are harmful ones, i.e. those that are conducive to the opposite states, namely, sickness and infirmity (499d1–e1).

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5 I take it that Callicles' admiration for courage and wisdom does not stem merely from their potential conduciveness to maximizing pleasure. Had that been the case, it would have been open to him to object to APC by claiming that the isolated case of pleased cowardly soldiers does not alter the general fact that courageous action is the best overall strategy for maximizing pleasure. In order for APC to have any force, Callicles must take courage and wisdom to be intrinsically better than their opposites. Yet, as I shall attempt to show in what follows, since Callicles does not properly understand the nature of these virtues, there is a sense in which he cannot be said to genuinely consider virtue or the general category of 'the fine' to have intrinsic value.

From this, it is inferred that:

> (2) beneficial pleasures and pains are to be pursued, whereas harmful pleasures and pains should be avoided (499e3–5).[6]

Once Callicles agrees to (2), Socrates reminds him of a principle that was agreed to in the course of the earlier conversation with Polus in 467c–468e, namely:

> (3) All items or actions that are not categorically and invariably good must be pursued for the sake of the good (499e6–500a2).

From this general principle together with (2) it now follows that:

> (4) Pleasant actions are to be pursued for the sake of the good and not for the sake of pleasure (500a2–3).

On the face of it, APC and AIV together form the following sequence: APC refutes Callicles' original position that pleasure is the sole human good, and leads him to acknowledge that while pleasure is in fact intrinsically good, there are other considerations one must take into account when pursuing a good life, considerations which place some limit on the pursuit of pleasure. AIV takes up this revised position and argues for the conclusion that pleasure does not, in fact, belong to the category of goods at all, since it is desirable only as a means to the promotion of items that, unlike it, are invariably and intrinsically desirable.[7]

But now, consider the following oddity about AIV. Premise (3) of AIV refers back to the argument with Polus which relied on an analysis of human motivation. According to the basic principles revealed in that analysis, the objects of our desires fall into two distinct kinds. The first kind consists of objects such as taking medicine, running or sailing which, in themselves, are conceived of as neither good nor bad. The value of these objects, and hence their ability to become objects of desire, is strictly dependent on whether or not we take them to be conducive to favorable results. Such actions, referred to as "intermediates"

6 While it is not stated explicitly, the inference from (1) to (2) must rely on the tacit assumption that the negative value of these harmful states outweighs the positive value of the pleasure that is secured in the actions leading to them, and that the positive value of the beneficial states outweighs the negative value of the pain involved in attaining them.

7 Socrates does not explain what he has in mind here in the claim that pleasure is merely instrumentally good. I shall deal with this issue directly at a later stage in the paper.

(*ta metaxu*), are claimed not to constitute genuine objects of desire, on account of the fact that no one would ever form a desire to perform them if they did not lead to some outcome which is desired independently of them. Whatever desire we do form for these objects is therefore strictly conditional on their contingent relation to other objects of desire (467c5–468b4).[8] In contrast to such contingent and conditional objects of desire, objects of the second kind, such as health, wealth and wisdom, are such that their value for us is unconditional and independent of any external result. Objects of this kind, which are valued in and of themselves, elicit desires which are correspondingly stable and immutable (467e4–6). These items constitute the true ends of our actions and provide the actions and objects of the first category with whatever value they have for us, when they have it. Socrates' distinction is therefore between, on the one hand, objects of intrinsic and unconditional value[9] which elicit stable and immutable desires and, on the other hand, objects (usually actions) of instrumental and hence conditional value, ones that elicit desires which are themselves strictly conditional on the agent's assessment of their conduciveness to some unconditionally desired end.[10]

8 It is important not to read the passage as making the blanket denial that intermediates are ever objects of desire. While Socrates does introduce the notion of intermediates in 467c–d by claiming that we do not desire actions such as sailing or taking medicine but only those things for the sake of which we perform them, such as health and wealth (οὐ τοῦτό ἐστιν ὃ βούλονται, ὃ ποιοῦσιν ἑκάστοτε … ἀλλ᾽ ἐκεῖνο οἶμαι οὗ ἕνεκα πλέουσιν, πλουτεῖν), at 468c he claims that we do in fact desire intermediates whenever we take them to be conducive to the attainment of ends (ἐὰν μὲν ὠφέλιμα ᾖ ταῦτα, βουλόμεθα πράττειν αὐτά, βλαβερὰ δὲ ὄντα οὐ βουλόμεθα). The apparent contradiction between these two claims is relieved by Socrates' immediately preceding remark, that we do not desire intermediates "just like that" (ἁπλῶς οὕτως 468c3). It seems clear that the purpose of this phrase is to qualify the earlier blanket claim that we do not desire intermediates, and to explain precisely in what way we do in fact desire them. The point is not to deny that agents ever form desires to perform or attain intermediates, but merely to emphasize that such desires are strictly conditional upon certain clearly defined circumstances (here, I am in agreement with Penner, "Desire and Power," 178–9).

9 It is common for commentators to talk of these goods as if our desire for them is in fact dependent on our conception of them as instrumental for the attainment of an ultimate good, namely, happiness; see for example Gregory Vlastos, *Socrates Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 224–232; and Penner "Desire and Power," 181. Yet Socrates here says nothing to hint that he conceives of happiness as the only genuine intrinsic good and of these other goods as subordinate to it in some sense.

10 In giving this account of the theory of motivation introduced in the argument with Polus I am setting aside a basic issue which is central to the treatment of these passages, namely, whether Socrates takes desire to be aimed at the agent's own notion of the (intrinsic) good, or at the genuine good – even if that good happens to be at odds with the agent's conception of it. While I cannot treat this issue adequately here, the following remarks

In order to properly understand the ramifications of AIV's reliance on (3) it is crucial to emphasize how the psychological principles introduced in 467c–468e must not be understood: the distinction between, on the one hand, intrinsic, unconditional goods/invariable desires and, on the other, instrumental, conditional goods ('intermediates')/variable desires, does not translate into the normative claim that we should only indulge our desires for intermediates (such as exiling and confiscating property) on those occasions when we take them to be conducive to the attainment of intrinsic goods such as physical and financial prosperity. Rather, the distinction stipulates a fact about the desire for intermediates: according to it we simply lack any desire for intermediates on those occasions when we do not take them to be conducive to the attainment of intrinsic goods. This is brought out very forcefully by Socrates' assimilation of actions such as exiling and killing to that of taking medicine. Grouping them together under one category is meant to drive home the idea that intermediates in themselves have absolutely no attraction for us.[11] The issue of refraining, curbing or controlling our desires for intermediates simply does not arise,

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will help situate my view in regard to it: while it is evident that Socrates does hold some objectivist conception of the good, I am assuming (as will become clear in what follows) that this does not conflict with his commitment to the idea that different characters are distinguished from each other by the distinct values, i.e. distinct conceptions of intrinsic goods, to which they subscribe. The attachment to such values is paramount for explaining their actions and general orientation of their practical exertions. Thus, as will become clearer in what follows, I take it that the notion of the "apparent good" must play a central role in Socrates' explanation of human motivation. For a highly lucid account of the issues concerning the relation between the apparent and the real good as objects of desire, along with what seems to me a very good suggestion for how they should best be addressed, see Rachel Barney, "Plato on the Desire for the Good," in *Desire, Practical Reason and the Good*, ed. S. Tenenbaum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

11 This should be enough to dispel any idea that the distinction is meant to apply only to rational desires and that Socrates means to leave open the possibility of our being attracted to intermediates in some non-rational, i.e. good-independent manner, e.g. for fun. Such a suggestion might attempt to appeal to the fact that in presenting the distinction, Socrates uses only the verb βούλομαι and never ἐπιθυμέω. Accordingly, it might be claimed that Socrates' view is that while no one would ever "wish" an intermediate ἁπλῶς οὕτως, one might still "desire" it in this immediate, non-derivative way (for a suggestion of this kind, see Devereux, "Virtue," 403–4). But, first, as I have said, the assimilation of intermediates such as running to the act of taking medicine rules out this alternative desiderative attitude to intermediates. Second, Socrates does in fact pick out a motivation for performing intermediates which is distinct from wishing, namely, "doing what one likes" (ποιεῖ ἃ δοκεῖ αὐτῷ, 468d4). Yet this phrase is identified with the notion of doing "what seems best" (οἰόμενος ἄμεινον εἶναι αὐτῷ, 468d3). So, even when tyrants perform intermediates which (it turns out in retrospect) they had no wish for, they nevertheless act in accordance with their conception of the good.

since the occurrence of these desires is strictly conditional upon our rational evaluation of whether or not they will in fact allow us to attain the objects of our unconditional and invariable desires, namely, the items we take to be intrinsically good.

Notice also that the psychology in question has an important concomitant which is quite clearly presupposed by Socrates' subsequent remarks to Polus. As we saw, Polus identified health, wealth and wisdom as items that belong to the category of intrinsic goods and which therefore function as consistent and invariable objects of desire. But, should Polus realize that one of these items, say wealth, has mere instrumental value, his desire for it should thereby also undergo a change and become strictly conditional upon his assessment of its conduciveness to whatever now remains in the category of intrinsic goods. This means that unconditional desires are not brute facts about the human psyche, but are themselves dependent on the agent's presently held conception of the intrinsic goodness of their objects. While such desires may not be as fickle as conditional ones – since an agent's conception of his basic values does not typically alter according to varying circumstances – Socrates nevertheless assumes that they too are open to revision, consequent on some thorough process of intellectual progress (or, perhaps also intellectual decline). That such change in one's conception of the objects of intrinsic value is possible should appear obvious when we reflect on the fact that the desire for wealth cannot be a brute fact about our psyche but is derivative on the contingent fact that we grow up in societies where its accumulation is possible. And, in fact, it seems clear that Socrates relies precisely on the possibility of such a change in our values when he urges on Polus that justice is the sole criterion for happiness (470e4–11). Since Polus did not formerly include justice in his list of intrinsic goods (in fact, Polus holds that it is not even instrumentally valuable), it follows that Socrates presupposes that one's conception of value is open to reconsideration.

These facts about the principles introduced in the argument with Polus must now make AIV appear odd for the following reason: While premise (3) of AIV explicitly relies on these principles, both it and the argument's conclusion in (4) are framed in the prescriptive mode, i.e. that all things *must be done* for the sake of the good (ἕνεκα γάρ που τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἅπαντα … πρακτέον εἶναι, 499e6–7), and hence that pleasant activities too must be performed for that reason (τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἄρα ἕνεκα δεῖ καὶ τἆλλα καὶ τὰ ἡδέα πράττειν, 500a2–3), and not for their own sake, i.e. not for the pleasure they provide. But this must surely appear strange since the argument with Polus leaves no room for any normative claims regarding our pursuit of intermediates. A prescriptive

conclusion of this kind would be cogent only under the assumption that intermediates have their own source of attraction, one which is independent of the agent's evaluation of their contribution to some good; yet, as we saw, the relation between actions belonging to the category of intermediates and the items belonging to the category of goods is such that the former are by their very nature desired merely as means for securing the latter. In light of this, any prescription to the effect that we should pursue intermediate actions only on those occasions when we recognize their contribution to the good is bound to appear completely redundant. This problem should make us uncomfortable in the extreme. Even if one accepts the possibility that Socrates moves freely in different parts of the *Gorgias* between two distinct psychological theories, one would still expect him not to confound these theories in one and the same argument. Yet AIV seems to rely precisely on two such incompatible views about the nature of human motivation.

I would like to suggest that rather than making us doubt Plato's merits as a philosophical author, the difficulty before us should be taken as an incentive to rethink the entailments of a fully intellectualistic theory of the soul. The underlying assumption of current readings of the *Gorgias* is that Socrates' talk of mental conflict and his advice to curb and chastise recalcitrant desires presuppose his acknowledgement of non-rational desires. This, as we have seen, leads either to a reading which finds two distinct psychological theories in the *Gorgias*, or to one which denies that Socrates ever held that all desires are necessarily good-oriented. In what follows I shall attempt to take a different route and argue that there is no incompatibility between a fully rationalistic psychology and the phenomenon of mental conflict. But, as we shall see, this will require us to alter our conception of what is meant by the idea that all desires are oriented towards the good. The popular construal of the idea that all desires are good-oriented is that a desire to perform a given action is necessarily the manifestation of the agent's judgment that this action constitutes the all-things-considered best practical alternative for him or her to take. Since, presumably, two distinct practical alternatives cannot both be judged as "best" or maximally prudent, it follows that the agent cannot experience conflicting desires for distinct actions. In contrast to this reading of what the good relevant to an intellectualist psychology is, I shall suggest that when Socrates claims that desires are aimed at the good he is not thinking of the agent's particular prudential judgments, but rather of what I shall term the agent's general "values". These values, we shall see, are precisely the items that fall under the category of intrinsic goods discussed in the argument with Polus.

3 Mental Conflict in Socrates' Rationalist Psychology

A prescription to curb and chastise a desire for pleasure presupposes that an agent can judge that it is best for him not to pursue a pleasant action and yet, at the same time, experience an intense desire for that action based on the recognition that it will cause him pleasure. How can this fact be accommodated by a psychological theory that assumes all desires are manifestations of judgments concerning the good? In order to answer this question, it will be profitable to reexamine Polus' list of intrinsic goods. Polus had agreed that wealth, health and wisdom are all desired for their own sake. Accordingly, and in contrast to desires for intermediates such as killing and exiling, he must take the agent's desire for these goods to be unconditional, i.e. to be consistent and unmitigated by considerations of any possible contingencies. But now, consider the following scenario: Polus has come upon the opportunity to conduct a highly lucrative business transaction with several battle-hardened yet quite un-business-savvy Spartans. In fact, the lucrativeness of the transaction involves cheating the Spartans of what should be their rightful share in the profits. Polus has a burning desire to conduct the transaction, yet is held back by his fear of physical retribution that is likely to follow once the Spartans recognize they have been conned. Ultimately Polus, who reasonably values his physical integrity more highly than his financial flourishing, decides to refrain from acting on the desire to conduct the unjust and lucrative yet physically injurious business transaction. Does Polus experience genuine mental struggle in this case, or does his judgment that it is better to refrain from unjust action lead to the dissipation of the desire to cheat? It seems to me that the principles of the psychological theory he and Socrates agreed on dictate that the former is the case.[12] Since (what are taken by the agent as) intrinsic goods are objects of invariable and consistent desires, the theory should lead us to expect that in this case Polus will be plagued by two conflicting desires at the same time: one which is aimed at the most lucrative course of action and one which is aimed at the action most conducive to health, which Polus also takes to be the most prudent.

12 While Socrates does claim that we pursue intermediates such as running "if we think it is better" (οἰόμενοι βέλτιον εἶναι, 468b2), there is no need to take this claim as a commitment that desires always follow prudential judgments. The context is simply a general explanation of why we bother to perform intermediate actions which we would otherwise have no motivation to perform. Socrates is not speaking here of the resolution of complex deliberations involving incompatible desirable courses of action, such as the one I am describing.

It is important for my purposes that we recognize precisely what allows the psychic conflict in question to occur, and why it implies no breach of the constraints of rationality: wealth and health are, in principle, fully compatible with each other as values; that is, nothing in taking health to be an intrinsic good militates against taking wealth to be a good of the same sort. The conflict between them springs merely from contingent circumstances that prevent the desires for both to be simultaneously satisfied. Thus, due to his particular scheme of values, Polus can expect to encounter scenarios where he will be forced to curb a persistent (since unconditional) desire for one intrinsic good in order to satisfy the desire for a different such good which he happens to treat as more valuable in the given circumstances. What is crucial here is that taking health to be superior to wealth does not in any way cause the desire for wealth to abate whenever the two happen to conflict. This, I suggest is because there is nothing in the attachment to health that might lead Polus to reconsider his principled attachment to wealth and his conception of it as an intrinsic good. Such reevaluation would only occur if Polus were to come to subscribe to some value which is in principle incompatible with and militates against taking the acquisition of wealth as an intrinsic good. An attachment to such a value would lead Polus to demote wealth from the category of intrinsic goods and place it in the category of intermediates (as that is the only other category left to place it in other than "evils" – see 467e1–3), and to thereby cease from treating the amassing of profit as a self-contained reason for action.[13]

I suggest then that the theory of motivation presented in the conversation with Polus places certain constraints on the occurrence of desires. These constraints reflect a demand for coherence among simultaneously held values. This entails that conflicting desires can stem from a single, purely rational, source of motivation, as long as these desires are aimed at goods which are, in principle, compatible with each other.[14] The fact that it may not be possible to

13 It seems to me that the value whose adoption as an intrinsic good would lead to this shift in Polus' scheme of values and to a corresponding change in his desiderative orientation in relation to wealth is justice. Though I will not argue for this specific claim, my reasons for thinking that justice and, in general, the fine, are incompatible with taking wealth to be intrinsically valuable will become clearer in what follows (see especially note 22 below).

14 Thus, my position contrasts with those who, like Jessica Moss, hold that a plurality of values entails a corresponding plurality of loci of motivation in the soul. There seems to be no principled reason why one could not rationally subscribe to a plurality of values, as long as these are not mutually exclusive. While it may turn out that a proper understanding of what is valuable in a human life will ultimately result in the adoption of a single value to the exclusion of others, this in itself is not the result of any logical constraints on the number of values one can rationally subscribe to, but an entailment of the identity of

actually attain some of these goods simultaneously due to contingent circumstances does nothing to dissipate the desire for one of them, even when the agent has a clear preference between them. Note that while this interpretation presents Socrates' theory of desire as fully rationalistic in that it ties each desire to the agent's conception of the good, it is markedly different from the familiar sort of intellectualism often attributed to him. As we have seen, the traditional reading of Socrates' intellectualism takes desires to be derivative from the agent's prudential judgments regarding where her maximal good lies in some particular situation. When faced with the scenario described above, this reading would claim that, upon consideration, Polus will ultimately form a desire only for the healthy course of action, since he judges that action to be maximally prudent. In contrast to this, the reading I propose detaches the notion of rational desires from the agent's prudential judgment about what is the all-things-considered optimal course of action, and instead links them to her basic scheme of values or what she takes to be intrinsically good.[15]

And now, in light of these suggestions, let us return to our initial difficulty about AIV. Consider Callicles' attitude to pleasure, and the change it undergoes in the course of his conversation with Socrates. Callicles' initial position, which he upheld until faced with the conclusion of APC was that pleasure is the sole human good. According to the analysis of desire presented in the conversation with Polus, this means that Callicles' desire for pleasure should be persistent, i.e. unconditional and unhindered by any recognition of mitigating circumstances. Callicles' revised position, adopted as a result of APC, entails that there are in fact goods other than pleasure, and that these goods place some limit on the desirability of pleasant actions, thus leading to his recognition of the distinction between "good" and "bad" pleasures. But what, precisely, is the relation between these newly recognized goods and pleasure? Specifically, are these goods compatible in principle with the idea that pleasure is an intrinsic good (in the same way that Polus' health and wealth are compatible), or are they such that recognizing their status as intrinsic goods will necessarily lead to a revision in Callicles' conception of the value of pleasure?

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the particular good which happens to be the true one for human beings to hold. J. Moss, "Hedonism and the Divided Soul in Plato's Protagoras," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 96,3 (2014).

15 To clarify: I do not mean to suggest that prudential judgments do not lead to the formation of desires for action. My point is merely that under Socrates' rationalistic conception of the soul, one need not conceive of an action as all-things-considered best in order to desire it. The fact that prudential judgments do lead to the formation of desires is precisely what allows for the occurrence of mental conflict between the agent's practical orientation or "choice" and her recalcitrant desire for a course of action that conflicts with this choice.

Asking this question brings to light an additional intriguing fact about AIV. While AIV is meant to take up the position Callicles adopts in the wake of APC, it in fact seems to attack a somewhat different position than the one we would expect considering the details of that earlier argument. APC drove home the idea that vicious (cowardly or foolish) pleasures cannot constitute the human good. In light of this, when Callicles frames his new position by claiming that some pleasures are good while others bad we naturally expect him to mean that the limiting factor on the desirability of pleasure is virtue and, generally, considerations of what is "fine". Yet, when Socrates takes up Callicles' revised position in premises (1) and (2) of AIV, he cashes out the notion of "good" by speaking of health and general considerations of what is "beneficial", and tacitly drops any mention of virtue and the fine. But this change makes a world of difference in regard to the question we are asking. This, as I shall attempt to show, is because while there is no apparent inconsistency in taking both pleasure and health to be intrinsic goods, Socrates takes it to be impossible for an agent who understands the nature of virtue or the fine to treat both it and pleasure as intrinsic goods.

Why are there no rational constraints on taking both pleasure and health to be intrinsic goods? One might initially suppose that there are in fact such constraints since the indiscriminate pursuit of pleasure is inevitably conducive to ill health. Thus, unlike the conflict between health and wealth which requires an imaginative scenario (Polus and the Spartans) in order to be brought out, one can point to a familiar and systematic adverse relation between the pursuit of some paradigmatic pleasures, such as luxurious food and excessive drink, and the attainment of health.[16] Yet it is important to recognize that this systematic relation is nevertheless contingent, in that it depends on empirical facts about nutrition and the constitution of the human body. There is no conceptual constraint on imagining a world where the constant consumption of sweets or fat[17] has no adverse effect on one's physique. Consequently, there is no noticeable incoherence in wishing both to be able to consume a limitless quantity of sweets and to remain in perfect health. This, I suggest, is a general fact about the relation between the notion of pleasure and the notion of "benefit" which Socrates unexpectedly invokes in premises (1) and (2) of AIV. Conceiving of the items that are traditionally associated with the notion of benefit, such as health and wealth as ends is fully consistent with treating pleasure in

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16 For a clear statement of Plato's acknowledgment of this fact see *Grg.* 518c–e, and also *Resp.* IV 425e–426b.

17 Or, if one prefers the ancient parallels to these modern dietary trends – meat (*Resp.* II 373c–d); excessively seasoned food (Hippocrates, *Ancient Medicine* 14); eels and gray mullets (Hippocrates *Internal Affections* 6).

the same way, even if their actual attainment may, in practice, require us to postpone or abort an attempt to attain pleasure.

In contrast to this, I wish to suggest that there is a basic (if perhaps veiled) incoherence in treating both virtue and pleasure as intrinsic goods. To see this, consider the following.[18] Human beings, like all other animals, find it pleasant to consume food and drink when they stand in physical need of them. Since this feeling of pleasure increases or subsides in proportion to the degree of the body's need of sustenance, there is a straightforward way in which, at least in the case of those endowed with a healthy physical constitution,[19] the sensation of pleasure serves as an indication for when it is proper to consume nourishment and when it is proper to desist from its consumption. When thought of under this function, pleasure is conceived of merely as a means to an end, where the end in question is the attainment of vigor and health.[20] Yet unlike other animals, human beings also have the technological capacity to embellish food so as to make it pleasing to the taste in ways that allow it to be enjoyed even after the body's needs have been satisfied. Thus, human beings are unique among animals in having the capacity and (clearly) the tendency to seek out food and drink in a manner that is independent of their basic bodily needs and is detrimental to the attainment of vigor and health. This pervasive human attitude to food, drink and sex necessarily involves a different attitude towards pleasure than the one outlined earlier. In such behavior the value of the experience of pleasure ceases from being thought of as strictly subservient to the needs of the body and instead comes to be conceived as a goal whose value is unmitigated by and unconditional upon other circumstances.

And now, consider the additional fact that the persistent desire to pursue food, drink and sex in varieties and quantities that deviate from and exceed the body's needs is definitive of the vice of intemperance. This connection between an excessive, luxurious and unhealthy diet, and the vice of intemperance is made explicit in many Platonic passages and, in fact, accords with the prevalent notion of his contemporaries about the nature of this vice. To give only a few examples, in *Republic* IV 425e–426b Socrates claims that chronic

18 The following account of the repercussions of treating pleasure as intrinsically valuable will at best appear coherent yet speculative. It forms part of a broader project in which I am currently engaged which has yet to see the light of print.

19 Note Plato's emphasis on this requirement in *Grg.* 505a.

20 I do not mean to imply that animals take pleasure as an instrumental good. Clearly, the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental value requires a capacity for abstraction that is unavailable to animals. Rather, my point is that animals naturally seek pleasure in a way that corresponds to their basic bodily needs, and that this would correspond to a rational animal's recognition that pleasure is merely an instrumental good.

illness is a direct result of intemperance which is manifested in a diet consisting of excessive consumption of food, drink and sex. Again, in *Republic* VIII 558d–561b Socrates distinguishes "necessary" from "unnecessary" desires by means of their effects on one's body, claiming that necessary desires are ones which are either necessary for survival or conducive to health, whereas unnecessary ones are those which go beyond the former (presumably in quantity), and also seek different varieties of food. He then says about the latter that they are not merely harmful to the body, but also for the soul's possession of reason and temperance. The same connection is made at *Charmides* 157a, where Socrates claims that the possession of temperance in the soul enables the acquisition of bodily health. Outside the Platonic corpus, we find Aristotle expressing an explicit commitment, in *Eth. Nic.* III 11, 1119a11–20, to the connection between the vice of intemperance and pleasures that are ill-conducive to health and financial security. Thus, if we accept the suggestion that a conception of pleasure as a goal lies at the heart of the uniquely human tendency to pursue food, drink and sex in manners and quantities that are detrimental to the body's well-being, we can now acknowledge that this same conception of the value of pleasure lies at the heart of the vice of intemperance.

Exposing the connection between the vice of intemperance and the belief that pleasure is intrinsically valuable should now allow us to see why it is incoherent to conceive of both temperance and pleasure as intrinsic goods. In order for this incoherence to become apparent, what needs to be emphasized is that it is possible to refrain from acting intemperately due to two distinct motivations, and while being under two correspondingly distinct psychological states. On the one hand, one can refrain from intemperate activity for the sake of preserving one's health. If we accept the idea that pleasure and health are compatible values, and bear in mind the theory of desire introduced in the conversation with Polus, we can see that an agent so motivated will continue to experience desires for intemperate activities even when she chooses to refrain from them. What needs to be emphasized is that agents of this kind do not feel aversion to intemperate activities as such, but merely to their physical consequences (whose negative value, they believe, outweighs the pleasure they afford). According to these psychological principles, agents who succeed in acting temperately merely for the sake of health will do so through the exercise of self-control.

Yet one can also refrain from intemperate action due to the belief that intemperance is intrinsically bad. What would be the consequent psychological and cognitive ramifications of taking temperance as an end, i.e. of acting temperately for the sake of temperance? Acting temperately in this manner should involve an aversion not towards the consequences of an intemperate diet but

to each and every intemperate action as such. But what, precisely, would one find repugnant about such actions? To answer this question, consider Socrates' behavior at a banquet. As Eryximachus claims when suggesting in the *Symposium* that the proceedings not include heavy drinking, Socrates himself has no compunction at all about copious drinking in the context of a symposium. He also claims that such drinking bouts are injurious to the body and should therefore be avoided for medical reasons (*Symp*. 176b–d). Yet, clearly, all through the *Symposium* Socrates is presented as the paradigm of temperance and there is no indication that his implied participation in drinking bouts requires him to overcome his virtuous preferences. This means that acting intemperately cannot be fully defined by specifying the external features of a given action, such as its nutritional value or foreseeable physical effects. Rather, I wish to suggest, what exonerates Socrates' "over-drinking" – which might otherwise count as intemperate – of any ethical blame is the fact that he does not engage in it for the sake of pleasure, but for the sake of philosophical conversation, or even just to congratulate a friend on his artistic success. Thus, conceiving of temperance as an end rather than a means (and so, in practice, acting through temperance rather than through mere prudence) resides in the recognition that the attainment of pleasure should not be conceived of as an end, but as fully subordinate to some other goal. While this goal will most often be the satisfaction of some bodily need, pleasant actions can also be temperately pursued as instrumental to an ethical purpose such as improving our fellow citizens by associating with them in various social contexts.

If this is along the right lines, I would like to suggest the following story about the relation of APC and AIV, and the corresponding explanation for why in the course of AIV and even after its conclusion has been accepted Socrates continues to speak to Callicles as if the desire for pleasure is an ineliminable feature of our psyche. APC, which brought to the fore the tension between the idea that both pleasure and virtue are goods, is an argument whose proper conclusion is that pleasure is not an intrinsic good at all. Yet Callicles is not in a position to recognize this conclusion. The reason for this is that the incongruence between the idea that the pleasant and the fine are both goods is most manifest in the case of a particular species of the fine, namely, temperance. But it is part and parcel of Callicles' position that temperance is not, in fact, a virtue on par with wisdom and courage and is not a genuine species of the fine at all. Unlike Socrates, who holds that courage, wisdom, justice and temperance are all manifestations of one and the same intellectual and psychological state (506c–507c), Callicles' position is that unlike courage and wisdom, justice and temperance are fine merely by convention yet base by nature (483a, 491e–492c). As a consequence of his detachment of temperance from courage and wisdom, Callicles cannot see the principled incongruity between these

latter virtues and the desire for pleasure even when presented with APC. The only conclusion he can draw from APC at this stage of his intellectual development is the somewhat diluted one, according to which while pleasure is in fact a basic human value, there are other such values whose pursuit can legitimately function as a constraint on the pursuit of pleasure.

It is for this reason that, in presenting the premises of AIV immediately following Callicles' acceptance of the conclusions of APC, Socrates describes the additional goods Callicles has been forced to acknowledge in terms of health and "the beneficial" rather than virtue and "the fine". What prompts this substitution of the beneficial for the fine is the fact that, unlike temperance and the fine, health and the beneficial can be treated as values alongside pleasure with no apparent contradiction.[21] In light of this, and assuming that Socrates really is committed to the moral and intellectual improvement of his interlocutor (rather than merely winning the argument), I would like to suggest the following: pointing to "the beneficial" as a constraint on the pursuit of pleasure is, as it were, a necessary first stage in the dialectical cure for the perverted intellectual state of someone who, like Callicles, starts out holding the view that pleasure is the sole good and refuses to acknowledge even the instrumental value of temperance. Rather than vainly forcing him to admit that temperance is not merely useful but also intrinsically valuable and that pleasure is not a good at all, Socrates chooses to begin by alerting Callicles to the fact that he too would accept some constraints on the pursuit of pleasure, even if he does hold pleasure to be intrinsically valuable. These constraints, which are presented as the requirements of health and strength, i.e. goods that pertain to the body, turn out to be *coincidentally* those of temperance, in that the strategy that best promotes them corresponds to the dictates of temperance. Socrates' first step then is to induce Callicles to accept the instrumental value of temperance by having him admit that he too can recognize the intrinsic value of health or the beneficial.

This now allows us to resolve the problem of the prescriptive mode used in AIV and to see that Socrates' subsequent claims about the need to chastise

21 As further confirmation for the claim that pleasure is compatible with the beneficial but not with the fine, note that in the argument Socrates presents to Polus at 474c–475e, whose purpose is to prove that committing injustice is worse than suffering it, Socrates introduces a premise which reduces the value of "the fine" to that of pleasure and benefit (474d–475a). I would like to suggest that, far from reflecting Socrates' own view of the value of the fine, this premise is tailored to Polus' intellectual state which does not acknowledge the intrinsic value of the fine (in his case the relevant species of the fine is justice rather than temperance). For our purposes, it is important to see that the premise in question entails that it is possible to treat pleasure and benefit together as values. It also shows that we should not expect anyone who subscribes to these values to treat the fine as intrinsically valuable.

intemperate desires for pleasure are fully compatible with a rationalistic psychology. For anyone who has attained an understanding of the nature of virtue, i.e. one who recognizes both the intrinsic value of the virtues and their unity, and hence accepts the idea that pleasure's value is merely instrumental (thus placing it in the category of 'intermediates' rather than that of "goods"), the desire for a pleasant action will always be conditional upon his conception of its conduciveness to the good. For someone in this state, there can be no recalcitrant desires for pleasure, since any desire for a pleasant action will reflect his view that it is good for him to perform it. But taking "the fine", considered as a unified concept (i.e. one which includes justice and temperance), to be intrinsically valuable requires a considerable amount of intellectual refinement, one which both Callicles and Polus evidently lack. Since, as we saw, Callicles can only go as far as to acknowledge "the beneficial" as a limit on the pursuit of pleasure, and since this does nothing to root out his basic attachment to pleasure as a value, his desire for pleasure will necessarily remain constant and unconditional, and will not abate in view of his newfound (prudential) recognition that pursuing intemperate pleasures should be avoided due to their physical effects. Because of this, Socrates formulates the conclusion of AIV in the prescriptive mode, i.e. that one *should* perform pleasant actions only when they contribute to beneficial ends such as health.[22]

And the very same rationale explains Socrates' subsequent injunction that Callicles practice temperance in the form of self-control. This prescription is relevant for anyone who has not yet attained an understanding of the true value of virtue and who, consequently, treats it as mere means to an end. Since taking, e.g. temperance to be valuable merely as an instrument (in the form of a dietary strategy) for securing health leaves one with recalcitrant desires for pleasure, attempting to live temperately will require one to chastise and control their desire for the latter. Yet – and this is the crux of the matter – both motivations are fully rational in that they both reflect the agent's conception of what is non-derivatively good in a human life. Thus, the need to chastise

22 Note that the use of the prescriptive mode here suggests that the practical judgment about a given pleasant action being damaging to health is, in itself, insufficient to overcome the desire to pursue it. If such practical judgment did inherently control action, there would not be a need for the normative claim that we should stick by it. Thus, the kind of rationalist psychology underlying AIV seems to be congruent not merely with mental conflict but with the possibility of *akrasia*. This seems to me an innocuous repercussion (even in light of the argument in *Protagoras* 351b–358a) once we remember that, according to the reading I propose of Socrates' psychology, the agent who possesses *knowledge* of the good will experience neither *akrasia* nor mental conflict. Thus, mental conflict and *akrasia* are both dependent on ignorance of the good.

and curb desires for pleasure is relevant only for someone whose psychological condition is unsound. And, in fact, Socrates is clear that the burden of self-chastisement is applicable only to those who are not well and require some correction (505b–c). What I hope to have shown is that this psychological malady is, first and foremost, a manifestation of an intellectual failure, and that the perfected psychological state which is the goal of this chastisement does not consist in an equilibrium between a good and a pleasure-desiring part of the soul, but rather in a perfected rational state, one which consists in the understanding that pleasure is not a genuine human good.[23]

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23 I wish to thank Vladimír Mikeš, David Machek, and Michael Russo for substantial comments on earlier versions of this paper which helped me clarify my view.

CHAPTER 6

Se délivrer du plus grand mal : *elenchos* et châtiment dans le *Gorgias*

Louis-André Dorion

Abstract

In the *Gorgias* Socrates argues for two theses which aim at the same goal, but which are not, at least at first sight, compatible with each other. On the one hand, he argues that it is by means of *elenchos* that one gets rid of the greatest evil (458a). On the other hand, he maintains that it is by means of physical punishment that one is delivered from the greatest evil (477a, 478d). The objective is thus the same, namely to be rid of evil, even of the greatest evil, but the means to achieve it are extremely different, since *elenchos* is a dialectical procedure which addresses itself to the soul alone, whereas punishment is directed at the body with the possible aim of correcting the soul. This study will deal with two main issues. First, I will try to show that there are many links and overlaps between *elenchos* and punishment, in spite of all that distinguishes them at first sight. Secondly, after highlighting the main divergences between *elenchos* and punishment, I will try to determine whether it is possible to articulate in a coherent way the two theses supported by Socrates concerning the means of deliverance from the greatest evil.

Key words

Plato – Gorgias – Socrates – *elenchos* – punishment – evil – purification

1 Introduction

Socrate soutient dans le *Gorgias* deux thèses qui visent le même objectif, mais dont il n'est pas évident, du moins à première vue, qu'elles sont compatibles entre elles. Il soutient d'une part que c'est par le moyen de l'*elenchos* que l'on se débarrasse du plus grand mal (voir 458a) et, d'autre part, que c'est par le moyen du châtiment physique que l'on est débarrassé ou délivré du plus grand mal (voir 477a, 478d). L'objectif est donc le même, à savoir être débarrassé

du mal, voire du plus grand mal, mais les moyens d'y parvenir sont extrêmement différents, puisque l'*elenchos* est une procédure dialectique qui s'adresse à l'âme seule, alors que le châtiment s'abat sur le corps dans le but éventuel de corriger l'âme. Je traiterai dans cette étude de deux questions principales. Premièrement, je m'appliquerai à montrer qu'il y a entre l'*elenchos* et le châtiment, malgré tout ce qui les distingue à première vue, de nombreux liens et recoupements. Deuxièmement, après avoir mis en lumière les principales divergences entre l'*elenchos* et le châtiment, je m'efforcerai de déterminer s'il est possible d'articuler de façon cohérente les deux thèses soutenues par Socrate concernant les moyens de se délivrer du plus grand mal.

2 Les recoupements entre l'*elenchos* et le châtiment

Au cours de son entretien avec Gorgias, Socrate fait l'affirmation suivante au sujet de l'*elenchos* :

> Si donc tu es toi-même de cette classe d'hommes dont je fais précisément partie, ce serait pour moi un plaisir de te poser toutes mes questions; dans le cas contraire, j'en resterais là! Or qu'est-ce que cette classe à laquelle j'appartiens? C'est celle des hommes qui prendront plaisir à être réfutés (τῶν ἡδέως μὲν ἂν ἐλεγχθέντων), si je dis quelque chose qui n'est pas vrai; mais qui prendront plaisir aussi à réfuter (ἡδέως δ᾽ ἂν ἐλεγξάντων), si l'on dit quelque chose qui n'est pas vrai : de ceux qui, en vérité, ne trouveront pas, d'être réfutés, plus déplaisant que de réfuter (οὐκ ἀηδέστερον μεντἂν ἐλεγχθέντων ἢ ἐλεγξάντων); car c'est là, à mon jugement, un plus grand bien (μεῖζον … ἀγαθόν), pour autant que c'est un bien plus grand (μεῖζον ἀγαθόν) d'être débarrassé soi-même d'un mal, de celui qui est le plus grand, plutôt que d'en débarrasser un autre (ἀπαλλαγῆναι κακοῦ τοῦ μεγίστου ἢ ἄλλον ἀπαλλάξαι) : je ne pense pas en effet que, pour un homme, il y ait un mal aussi grave (τοσοῦτον κακόν) que de juger faux (δόξα ψευδής) sur les questions qui font précisément l'objet de notre débat actuel! (458a1–b1)[1]

1 Toutes les citations du *Gorgias* et des autres dialogues de Platon sont empruntées à la traduction de L. Robin, *Platon : Oeuvres complètes* (Paris : Gallimard, 1950). Je cite le texte grec établi par Eric R. Dodds, *Plato* : Gorgias, *Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1959).

Être réfuté est non seulement une source de plaisir, mais c'est aussi très avantageux dans la mesure où il est nécessairement profitable d'être délivré du plus grand mal (κακοῦ τοῦ μεγίστου, 458a7). Mais en quoi consiste le plus grand mal? La fin de l'extrait laisse clairement entendre que ce mal consiste en une opinion fausse (δόξα ψευδής, 458b1) sur l'objet du débat. On peut également rapprocher l'expression « le plus grand mal » des autres occurrences de la même expression dans la suite du dialogue. On compte en effet treize autres occurrences de l'expression « le plus grand mal » dans le *Gorgias* et il mérite d'être souligné que toutes ces occurrences sont placées dans la bouche de Socrate.[2] Il appert, après examen de toutes ces occurrences, que le plus grand mal concerne l'âme et qu'il consiste en une méchanceté de l'âme,[3] plus précisément l'injustice.[4] Socrate affirme même à deux reprises que le plus grand mal est non seulement de commettre l'injustice, mais aussi de ne pas être puni pour l'injustice que l'on a commise.[5] Il n'y a donc rien de plus avantageux, pour Socrate, que d'être délivré de l'injustice que l'on abrite dans son âme. J'attire également l'attention sur les deux occurrences du verbe ἀπαλλάττομαι (ἀπαλλαγῆναι … ἀπαλλάξαι, 458a7) car c'est précisément ce verbe, comme nous le verrons plus tard, que Platon emploie pour désigner l'effet attendu du châtiment.[6] Dans le cas de l'*elenchos*, l'emploi du verbe ἀπαλλάττομαι ne se limite pas au *Gorgias*, puisque c'est à nouveau ce verbe que Platon emploie dans le fameux passage du *Sophiste* où l'Étranger décrit en ces termes les effets de l'*elenchos* :

> [L'Étranger] les personnes interrogées se fâchent contre elles-mêmes, tandis qu'elles s'adoucissent à l'égard d'autrui, et c'est justement de cette

2 En plus de 458a7, voir 469b8, 476a4, 477a8, e4, e6, 478d5, e1, 479c2, c8, d6, 480d6, 509b1, 511a1.

3 Voir 477a8, 478d5, 478e1.

4 Voir 469b8, 477e6, 479c8, 480d6.

5 Voir 479d6, 509b1.

6 Le verbe ἀπαλλάττομαι n'a pas retenu l'attention des commentateurs jusqu'à maintenant. Il est en effet absent de l'index des termes grecs de Dodds (cet index compte pourtant plus de 200 termes!) et du riche index d'Irwin. Dodds, *Gorgias*, 404–406; T. Irwin, *Plato:* Gorgias*, Translated with Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 261–268. Les auteurs plus récents d'études sur le châtiment dans le *Gorgias* ne prêtent non plus aucune attention au verbe ἀπαλλάττομαι. Voir T. C. Brickhouse et N. D. Smith, *Socratic Moral Psychology* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2010); T. C. Brickhouse et N. D. Smith, « Incurable souls in Socratic psychology, » *Ancient Philosophy* 22 (2002); T. C. Brickhouse et N. D. Smith, « The problem of punishment in Socratic philosophy, » Apeiron 30 (1997); Ch. Rowe, « A problem in the Gorgias : how is punishment supposed to help intellectual error? » dans *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy, from Socrates to Plotinus*, éd. Ch. Bobonich et P. Destrée (Leiden : Brill, 2007); J. C. Shaw, « Punishment and psychology in Plato's Gorgias, » *Polis. The journal for ancient Greek political thought* 32 (2015).

> manière qu'elles sont libérées (ἀπαλλάττονται) des opinions puissantes et solides dont leur propre esprit est investi : libération (ἀπαλλαγῶν) qui, de toutes, à la fois est la plus agréable pour l'assistant qui l'écoute, et celle dont les effets possèdent, pour celui qui en est l'objet, la plus solide certitude. C'est que, mon cher enfant, la conviction de ceux qui, à leur égard, procèdent à cette purification (οἱ καθαίροντες) est tout à fait analogue à la conviction de ceux qui sont médecins du corps : à savoir qu'un corps ne sera pas capable de profiter de l'alimentation qui lui est fournie, avant qu'on ait expulsé de lui tout ce qui l'embarrasse (τὰ ἐμποδίζοντα); à propos de l'âme aussi, des réflexions identiques ont été faites par les gens dont il s'agit : à savoir qu'elle ne recueillera aucune utilité des connaissances qui lui seront fournies, avant que, en le critiquant, on ait amené à avoir honte celui qui est l'objet de cette critique; avant qu'on lui ait enlevé les opinions qui l'embarrassent et font obstacle (τὰς … ἐμποδίους δόξας) aux connaissances; et qu'ainsi on ait produit au jour l'homme en état de pureté et croyant seulement savoir ce que précisément il sait, mais pas davantage! — [Théétète] Au moins est-ce entre nos manières d'être celle qui vaut le mieux et qui est la plus sage (σωφρονεστάτη)! (230b–d)

Dans la mesure où l'*elenchos* est une forme de *katharsis*, de purgation, on comprend que son rôle est de débarrasser (ἀπαλλάττεσθαι) l'âme des opinions fausses qui font obstacle au véritable savoir. Revenons au *Gorgias*. Plus loin dans le dialogue, alors qu'il discute avec Polos, et que ce dernier prétend qu'un enfant pourrait réfuter Socrate, celui-ci associe à nouveau l'*elenchos* et le verbe ἀπαλλάττομαι :

> Mille grâces alors rendrai-je à cet enfant! mais autant aussi à toi-même, si tu me réfutes et me libères de ma sottise (ἐάν με ἐλέγξῃς καὶ ἀπαλλάξῃς φλυαρίας)! Allons! ne te lasse pas d'avoir de la bienfaisance pour un ami (φίλον ἄνδρα εὐεργετῶν); réfute-le plutôt (ἀλλ' ἔλεγχε)! (470c6–8)

Socrate serait reconnaissant qu'on le débarrasse, en le réfutant, non pas du plus grand mal, mais d'une simple « sottise », comme si la thèse qu'il soutient contre Polos, à savoir que l'injustice n'est jamais profitable, était une simple sottise.

Passons au châtiment. Alors qu'il s'entretient avec Polos, Socrate rapproche le châtiment (*dikè*) de la chrématistique et de la médecine. De même que la chrématistique délivre de la pauvreté, et la médecine de la maladie, de même la punition délivre (ἀπαλλάττει, 478a8) de l'intempérance et de l'injustice (ἀκολασίας καὶ ἀδικίας, 478b1). Après avoir affirmé que la punition (*dikè*) est

plus belle (κάλλιστον, 478b3) que la chrématistique et la médecine, il fait à son sujet l'observation suivante :

> N'est-ce donc pas, s'il [*scil.* le châtiment] est vraiment ce qu'il y a de plus beau (κάλλιστον), que, cette fois encore, il produit la plus grande quantité de plaisir, ou d'utilité, ou des deux à la fois (ἡδονὴν πλείστην ποιεῖ ἢ ὠφελίαν ἢ ἀμφότερα)? (478b5–7)

Cette observation rappelle ce que Socrate disait plus tôt de l'*elenchos*, à savoir qu'il est à la fois plaisant et avantageux d'être réfuté (458a). Ce n'est pas le seul rapprochement, loin de là, que l'on peut établir entre l'*elenchos* et le châtiment. Voyons-en quelques autres.

a) De même que c'est par le moyen de l'*elenchos* que l'on est débarrassé du plus grand mal (458a), de même le châtiment permet également à celui qui le subit d'être délivré du plus grand mal :

> [Socrate] Cette utilité est-elle précisément celle que je suppose? Ne devient-on pas meilleur quant à son âme, à condition d'être châtié justement (βελτίων τὴν ψυχὴν γίγνεται, εἴπερ δικαίως κολάζεται;)?—[Polos] C'est au moins probable.—N'est-ce pas alors d'un mal de son âme qu'est débarrassé (Κακίας ἄρα ψυχῆς ἀπαλλάττεται) celui qui paie la peine de sa faute (ὁ δίκην διδούς)?—Oui.—Or, n'est-ce pas du mal le plus grand qu'il est débarrassé (τοῦ μεγίστου ἀπαλλάττεται κακοῦ)? (477a5–b1)

L'objectif poursuivi par le châtiment est donc identique à celui recherché par l'*elenchos* et il s'exprime exactement dans les mêmes termes : être délivré du plus grand mal (ἀπαλλαγῆναι κακοῦ τοῦ μεγίστου, 458a7; τοῦ μεγίστου ἀπαλλάττεται κακοῦ, 477a8–b1). Dans ce qui suit immédiatement 477a, Socrate établit que le plus grand des maux, pour l'âme, est l'injustice et, plus généralement, toute forme de vice (477c). Le plus grand mal dont délivre le châtiment est à mes yeux identique au plus grand mal dont l'*elenchos* délivre l'âme, puisque l'injustice et toute autre forme de vice de l'âme consistent nécessairement en des opinions fausses.

b) L'*elenchos* et la punition ont également en commun de s'adresser à l'âme et de contribuer à la délivrer de l'injustice. Certes, si l'on s'en tient au texte du *Gorgias*, il n'y a aucun passage qui établisse expressément un lien entre l'*elenchos* et l'âme, mais ce lien peut être confirmé par le détour d'un autre lexique, en l'occurrence celui de l'examen et de la mise à l'épreuve (βάσανος, βασανίζειν). Étant donné que l'âme ne peut pas se soumettre elle-même à l'*elenchos*, elle a besoin du secours et de la médiation d'autrui pour y parvenir

et c'est précisément ce que Socrate explique à Calliclès en 486d–487a, lorsqu'il lui révèle qu'il a besoin de son âme à la façon d'une pierre de touche (βασάνου, 486d7) pour mettre la sienne à l'épreuve (βασανίζουσιν, 486d4; βασανιεῖν, 487a1; βασανίζειν, 487a4). Mettre l'âme à l'épreuve (βασανίζειν), l'éprouver à l'aide d'une pierre de touche (βάσανος), c'est une façon métaphorique d'exprimer la procédure dialectique par laquelle l'âme se soumet à l'*elenchos*.[7] Contrairement à l'*elenchos*, qui s'adresse directement à l'âme pour la débarrasser de l'injustice, c'est par la médiation du corps, qui subit le châtiment, que ce dernier atteint finalement l'âme pour la délivrer de l'injustice. Il y a plusieurs passages, dans le *Gorgias*, où le verbe ἀπαλλάττομαι, dans un contexte de châtiment, a pour objet l'injustice (477b7, 478a1, b1), qui est associée à une forme de méchanceté de l'âme (voir 477a7, 478a1, d5, d8).

c) Socrate affirme, en 478d, que la justice, lorsqu'elle est administrée sous forme de châtiment, a pour effet d'assagir (σωφρόνιζει, 478d6), c'est-à-dire de rendre plus modéré. L'homme qui est puni est délivré de son injustice et son âme devient ainsi plus sage, plus modérée. Platon n'affirme pas expressément, dans le *Gorgias*, que l'âme soumise à la réfutation devient plus modérée, mais il l'affirme ailleurs à au moins trois reprises.[8]

d) Pour mieux faire comprendre le rôle du châtiment, Socrate le rapproche souvent de la médecine (voir 478d, 480a). De même que la médecine délivre le corps du mal qui l'affecte il y a dans le *Gorgias* de nombreuses occurrences du verbe ἀπαλλάττομαι en référence à la médecine,[9] de même celui qui administre une punition délivre l'âme du mal qui la corrompt. Le rôle du châtiment est à ce point analogue à celui de la médecine que Socrate affirme même que la punition est « la médecine de la méchanceté (ἰατρικὴ γίγνεται πονηρίας ἡ δίκη, 478d7) ». Quant à l'*elenchos*, il n'est pas expressément comparé à la médecine dans le *Gorgias*,[10] mais Platon effectue ce rapprochement dans d'autres dialogues, notamment dans le passage déjà cité du *Sophiste*, où l'Étranger définit l'*elenchos* (230c–d). Platon reconnaît la vertu curative ou thérapeutique de

7 Pour la quasi-synonymie, dans un contexte dialectique, entre ἐλέγχειν et βασανίζειν, voir *Phil.* 23a : « [Socrate] Mais quoi? ne vaut-il pas mieux lui laisser maintenant la paix et éviter de lui faire de la peine en le soumettant à l'épreuve la plus rigoureusement exacte et en le confondant (τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην αὐτῇ προσφέροντα βάσανον καὶ ἐξελέγχοντα)? » (trad. Robin) Sur l'emploi des termes βάσανος, βασανίζειν, ἔλεγχος et ἐλέγχειν dans le contexte de l'interrogation judiciaire, voir L.-A. Dorion, « La subversion de l'*elenchos* juridique dans l'Apologie de Socrate, » *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 88 (1990) : 326.

8 Voir *Charm.* 167a, *Tht.* 210b–c, *Soph.* 230d (cité *supra*, 118–119).

9 Voir 478c1 (Μεγάλου γὰρ κακοῦ ἀπαλλάττεται), c6 (κακοῦ ἀπαλλαγή), 495e8–9 (οὐδὲ ἅμα ἀπαλλάττεται ὑγιείας τε καὶ νόσου), 496a4–5, a6, 514d7 (ἀπηλλάγη νόσου).

10 Voir toutefois 521e, où Socrate se compare à un médecin.

l'*elenchos* non seulement dans le *Sophiste* (230c–d), où il compare l'*elenchos* à la médecine et où il décrit les effets bénéfiques qui résultent, pour l'âme, d'être soumise à l'*elenchos*, mais aussi dans le prologue du *Charmide* (156b–157c), où les incantations qui doivent guérir Charmide de son mal de tête, et que Socrate a apprises auprès des médecins thraces de Zalmoxis, désignent très clairement, de façon métaphorique, les réfutations que Socrate administre, en bon médecin, à ses « patients ». Que l'*elenchos* procure la guérison de l'âme, en la délivrant de l'ignorance, est également affirmé par Socrate dans ce beau passage de l'*Hippias mineur* :

> Ainsi donc, sois bon! ne te refuse pas à être le médecin de mon âme (ἰάσασθαι τὴν ψυχήν μου); car c'est assurément un bien plus grand service que tu me rendras en me débarrassant l'âme de l'ignorance, que si c'était mon corps, d'une maladie. Sans doute, si c'est ton intention de prononcer un long discours, je t'en préviens : ce n'est pas de cette façon que tu pourras me guérir (οὐκ ἄν με ἰάσαιο), car je ne te suivrais pas! (372e–373a)

e) Un autre rapprochement entre l'*elenchos* et le châtiment est l'inutilité des témoins et des témoignages que l'on peut récolter en notre faveur, soit pour se soustraire à un *elenchos*, soit pour échapper au châtiment. Alors qu'il discute avec Polos, Socrate oppose l'un à l'autre deux types d'*elenchos* (471e–472c), soit l'*elenchos* rhétorique qui est habituellement employé devant les tribunaux, et l'*elenchos* dialectique dont Socrate semble considérer qu'il est le seul à le pratiquer. Voici comment Socrate caractérise l'*elenchos* rhétorique :

> Tu entreprends en effet, bienheureux, Pôlos, de me réfuter par des méthodes oratoires (ῥητορικῶς γάρ με ἐπιχειρεῖς ἐλέγχειν), à la façon de ceux qui, devant les tribunaux, estiment produire une preuve (ὥσπερ οἱ ἐν τοῖς δικαστηρίοις ἡγούμενοι ἐλέγχειν). Effectivement, dans ces endroits-là, les parties croient se réfuter l'une l'autre (δοκοῦσιν ἐλέγχειν), quand, à l'appui des allégations qu'éventuellement elles présentent, elle produisent des témoins nombreux et de bonne réputation (μάρτυρας πολλοὺς … καὶ εὐδοκίμους), tandis que, à l'appui de ses allégations, la partie adverse n'en produit qu'un seul ou même point du tout. Or, au regard de la vérité, cette sorte de preuve (οὗτος δὲ ὁ ἔλεγχος) n'a absolument aucune valeur. On peut en effet parfois être écrasé sous les faux témoignages, émis par nombre de gens et qui passent pour n'être pas peu de chose (ὑπὸ πολλῶν καὶ δοκούντων)! (471e2–472a2)

L'*elenchos* rhétorique a donc pour caractéristique essentielle d'être un discours dont l'autorité se fonde sur le nombre et le prestige[11] des témoins, et qui, pour cette raison même, est impuissant à découvrir la vérité, puisque la vérité d'un discours n'est pas fonction du nombre ni du prestige des hommes qui sont prêts à témoigner en sa faveur. Qui plus est, l'*elenchos* rhétorique peut contribuer à l'injustice dans la mesure où il peut arriver qu'un innocent soit condamné en raison d'une multitude de faux témoignages portés contre lui. Dans la suite du *Gorgias*, Socrate fait de nombreuses allusions à l'inutilité d'un grand nombre de témoins pour fonder un *elenchos*.[12] Le mépris de Socrate pour une défense fondée sur des témoignages est également manifeste dans le mythe eschatologique sur lequel se clôt le dialogue. Avant la réforme du tribunal de l'au-delà, de nombreux hommes, ayant des âmes mauvaises (ψυχὰς πονηρὰς ἔχοντες, 523c5), sont accompagnés de nombreux témoins attestant qu'ils ont vécu selon la justice (πολλοὶ μάρτυρες, μαρτυρήσοντες ὡς δικαίως βεβιώκασιν, 523c7–d1). Ces nombreux témoins produisent donc autant de faux témoignages qui contribuent à l'injustice des jugements qui sont rendus. Après la réforme du tribunal ordonnée par Zeus, l'âme du défunt comparaît seule devant le juge (523e), sans être assistée par des témoins. Qu'il s'agisse d'un *elenchos* ou d'un jugement pouvant conduire à un châtiment, celui qui doit répondre de sa vie doit le faire seul, sans le secours de témoins ou de témoignages en sa faveur.[13]

f) Le dernier rapprochement que j'ai identifié n'est pas anodin, puisqu'il confirme d'une éclatante façon la proximité entre l'*elenchos* et le châtiment. À la différence de tous les rapprochements que j'ai exposés jusqu'à maintenant, ce dernier rapprochement ne se fonde pas sur un élément commun à l'*elenchos* et au châtiment, mais plutôt sur une comparaison directe entre eux. En 505c, immédiatement après que Calliclès l'eut invité à interroger un autre interlocuteur (ἀλλ᾽ ἄλλον τινὰ ἐρώτα, 505c1–2), Socrate s'exclame :

> Voilà un homme qui ne supporte pas qu'on lui soit utile (οὐκ ὑπομένει ὠφελούμενος) et qu'il subisse cela même qui est l'objet de notre conversation, je veux dire d'être corrigé (κολαζόμενος)![14] (505c3–4)

11 Voir aussi *Resp.* II 366b. Le fondement de l'*elenchos* rhétorique – le nombre et la réputation des témoins – rappelle les deux critères qui servent, d'après Aristote, à identifier une « opinion autorisée » (ἔνδοξον), à savoir le *nombre* des hommes qui soutiennent une opinion et/ou leur *réputation* de sagesse (voir *Top.* I 1, 100b21–23).

12 Voir 473d, 474a, 475e–476a, 523c, 523e.

13 Sur l'inutilité des témoins et des témoignages dans un contexte dialectique, voir Dorion « *Elenchos* dialectique et *elenchos* rhétorique dans la défense de Socrate, » *Antiquorum philosophia* 1 (2007) : 78–81.

14 Trad. Robin légèrement modifiée.

La « correction » que Calliclès ne supporte pas n'est rien d'autre que l'*elenchos*,[15] dont Socrate a déjà souligné, en 458a, à quel point elle est profitable pour celui qui la subit. L'assimilation de l'*elenchos* à une forme de châtiment est également présente dans le *Lysis*. Avant que Ménexène ne fasse son entrée pour se joindre au groupe, Lysis formule une demande singulière à Socrate :

> [Socrate] Sois pourtant prêt à me servir de second, dans le cas où Ménexène entreprendrait de me réfuter : ne sais-tu pas quel disputeur il est?—[Lysis] Ah! oui, fit-il, et terriblement, par Zeus! Et c'est bien aussi pour cela que je souhaite t'entendre converser avec lui…—Pour que je prête à rire à mes dépens! répliquai-je.—Non, par Zeus! dit-il, mais pour que tu le corriges (ἀλλ᾽ ἵνα αὐτὸν κολάσῃς).[16] (211b–c)

Lysis attend donc de Socrate qu'il « corrige » son ami Ménexène, c'est-à-dire qu'il lui administre une correction, une leçon. Le verbe qu'emploie Lysis (κολάσῃς, 211c3) est celui-là même que Socrate emploie à de nombreuses reprises dans le *Gorgias*[17] pour exprimer le châtiment salvateur. Et il ne fait aucun doute, au vu de la discussion qui s'ensuit entre Socrate et Ménexène (211c–213d), qui a la réputation d'être un redoutable éristique (211b), que le châtiment attendu consiste précisément en une réfutation. Le lien entre *elenchos* et punition n'est pas exclusif à Platon, puisqu'on le trouve également dans un passage des *Mémorables* (I 4, 1) où Xénophon semble considérer que la finalité de l'*elenchos* n'est rien d'autre que d'administrer une correction.[18]

3 Divergences et articulation entre l'*elenchos* et le châtiment

Les rapprochements entre l'*elenchos* et le châtiment sont à ce point nombreux que l'on est inévitablement conduit à se demander s'ils ne font pas

15 Voir Rowe, « A problem in the *Gorgias*, » 32 ; Radcliffe G. Edmonds III, « Whip scars on the naked soul : myth and *elenchos* in Plato's *Gorgias*, » dans *Plato and Myth. Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myths*, éd. C. Collobert, P. Destrée et F. J. Gonzalez (Leiden : Brill, 2012), 176. Voir aussi Shaw, « Punishment and psychology, » 86.

16 Trad. Robin légèrement modifiée.

17 Voir 476a7, d8, e1, e2, e5, 477a6, 478a7, 479a1, 491e9, 505b9, 505b11, c4, 507d3, 527c1.

18 « Mais si certains croient, en le conjecturant d'après ce que d'aucuns écrivent et disent à son sujet, que Socrate fut excellent pour exhorter les hommes à la vertu, mais qu'il n'était pas en mesure de les y conduire, qu'ils examinent, après avoir considéré non seulement les questions et les réfutations (ἤλεγχεν) auxquelles il soumettait, pour les corriger (κολαστηρίου ἕνεκα), ceux qui s'imaginaient tout connaître, mais aussi les propos qu'il tenait jour après jour à ceux qui partageaient sa vie, s'il était en mesure de rendre ses compagnons meilleurs. »

double emploi ou quelles sont les circonstances où l'un serait plus approprié que l'autre. D'aucuns ont également proposé, sans même avoir établi entre l'*elenchos* et le châtiment autant de rapprochements que je viens d'en exposer, de considérer que le châtiment doit en fait être compris comme une expression imagée de l'*elenchos*,[19] de sorte qu'il n'y aurait rien d'étonnant à ce que l'on relève de nombreux rapprochements entre les deux. Le refus de considérer que Socrate puisse sérieusement envisager l'utilité des châtiments vient de ce qu'il semble impossible de justifier la pertinence des châtiments dans le cadre de l'intellectualisme socratique. Si personne ne fait le mal volontairement et qu'une faute est commise en raison de l'ignorance ou d'une opinion fausse, c'est en instruisant le fautif, et non pas en le châtiant, qu'on le ramènera sur le chemin de la vertu. Les commentateurs qui assimilent les châtiments à l'*elenchos* socratique justifient cette assimilation en arguant que Socrate n'a jamais reconnu que l'on pouvait rendre quelqu'un meilleur en lui administrant un châtiment.[20] Nous sommes en présence d'un réel problème; toutefois, il y a deux raisons principales pour lesquelles il me paraît impossible d'assimiler, purement et simplement, le châtiment à l'*elenchos*. Premièrement, comme nous le verrons sous peu, il y a entre les deux non seulement des recoupements et des rapprochements, mais aussi des divergences significatives, de sorte que le châtiment est irréductible à l'*elenchos*. Deuxièmement, il y a des passages où Socrate parle des châtiments corporels en des termes explicites et l'on voit mal comment ces châtiments pourraient être assimilés à des formes de « châtiment discursif »,[21] c'est-à-dire à des *elenchoi*. C'est le cas, par exemple, du passage suivant, où Socrate affirme que l'homme qui se rendrait coupable d'une injustice ne doit pas avoir recours à la rhétorique pour échapper au châtiment, mais qu'il doit au contraire s'y livrer de son plein gré :

> […] au lieu de dissimuler l'acte injuste qu'il a commis, on doit plutôt amener celui-ci au grand jour, afin que le coupable paie la peine de sa faute (ἵνα δῷ δίκην) et qu'il revienne à la santé; que l'on doit aussi bien se contraindre soi-même que contraindre les autres à ne point avoir peur, mais à se présenter, les yeux fermés, courageusement, ainsi qu'à un médecin pour qu'il nous brûle ou taille la chair; être en quête du bien et du beau, sans mettre en ligne de compte la douleur; s'offrir à être battu (τύπτειν

19 Voir surtout Rowe, « A problem in the *Gorgias*, » 32–36 et Shaw, « Psychology and punishment, » 75–87, qui reconnaît toutefois que Socrate admet la pertinence de l'exil et de la peine de mort.

20 Pour le point de vue opposé, voir T.C. Brickhouse et N. D. Smith, « The problem of punishment in Socratic philosophy, » *Apeiron* 30 (1997) : 95–107.

21 J'emprunte cette expression (« discursive punishment ») à J. C. Shaw. « Punishment and psychology, » 85.

> παρέχοντα), si ce sont des coups (πληγῶν) que mérite l'injustice dont on s'est rendu coupable, à être emprisonné, si c'est la prison qu'on a méritée, si c'est à l'amende, à la payer, à s'exiler si c'est l'exil, et à mourir enfin (ἀποθνῄσκοντα), si c'est la mort (ἐὰν δὲ θανάτου); être, soi, le premier à accuser soi-même et l'ensemble de ses proches, employer l'art oratoire à cet usage, en vue, une fois mises en lumière les injustices commises, d'être débarrassé de ce qui est le pire des maux : l'injustice (ἀπαλλάτωνται τοῦ μεγίστου κακοῦ, ἀδικίας)! (480c–d)

Socrate évoque dans ce passage une variété de peines, dont plusieurs sont des châtiments corporels (coups, emprisonnement, mise à mort). D'aucuns ont prétendu, sous prétexte qu'il s'agit de peines conditionnelles à une injustice commise, que ce passage n'est pas une confirmation de l'approbation, par Socrate, des châtiments corporels.[22] Or je ne vois pas en quoi le fait d'envisager les peines que l'on pourrait encourir, en cas d'injustice, n'aurait pas valeur, de la part de Socrate, d'approbation des différents châtiments corporels qui sont mentionnés dans ce passage et dont la sévérité serait fonction de la gravité de l'injustice commise. De plus, la fin de ce passage, qui n'est pas cité par Shaw, où Socrate établit un lien entre ces châtiments et le but poursuivi, à savoir être délivré de l'injustice, atteste à mes yeux, *pace* Shaw, que ce sont des châtiments justes et appropriés.[23] Comment pourraient-ils ne pas être justes s'ils contribuent, de l'aveu même de Socrate, à délivrer le coupable de son injustice?

Voyons maintenant les divergences qui empêchent que l'on assimile le châtiment à une forme d'*elenchos*. La mise en lumière de ces divergences nous permettra sans doute de mieux comprendre l'articulation, et peut-être même l'incompatibilité, entre l'*elenchos* et le châtiment.

La principale divergence, me semble-t-il, concerne la « vertu » de la douleur et de la souffrance. Dans le récit du mythe, Socrate fait l'affirmation suivante :

> D'autre part, ceux pour qui il y a profit à avoir payé la peine que leur ont infligée les Dieux ou les hommes, ce sont ceux dont les fautes ont été des fautes qui ne sont pas incurables (οὗτοι οἳ ἂν ἰάσιμα ἁμαρτήματα ἁμάρτωσιν); ce n'en est pas moins par le moyen de la souffrance et de douleurs (δι' ἀλγηδόνων καὶ ὀδυνῶν) que leur vient ce profit, ici-bas

22 « The claims are all conditional; Socrates does not here affirm that any of these are ever correct, just punishments. » (Shaw, « Punishment and psychology, » 79).

23 Concernant 480c–d, je souscris entièrement à cette observation de Brickhouse et Smith : « If he (sc. Socrate) really supposed, as Penner has put it on behalf of the standard view, that "*only philosophical dialogue* can improve one's fellow citizens," Socrates' recognition of such an impressive array of other forms of appropriate discipline would be simply inexplicable. » *Socratic Moral Psychology*, 113–114.

> comme dans l'Hadès (καὶ ἐνθάδε καὶ ἐν Ἅιδου); car il n'est pas possible d'être, autrement, débarrassé de l'injustice (οὐ γὰρ οἷόν τε ἄλλως ἀδικίας ἀπαλλάττεσθαι). (525b4–c1)

Socrate n'explique pas pourquoi la douleur et la souffrance sont indispensables pour être délivré de l'injustice (ἀδικίας ἀπαλλάττεσθαι, 525b4).[24] En outre, le caractère nécessaire de la souffrance et de la douleur ne laisse pas d'étonner car Socrate a plus tôt affirmé, dans un passage (478b) que nous avons examiné à la section précédente, que le châtiment procure beaucoup de plaisir, ou de l'utilité, ou encore les deux. L'on ne voit pas très bien comment l'on peut concilier ces deux passages. On s'étonne également que Socrate affirme, à la fin de l'extrait cité, qu'il n'est pas possible d'être délivré de l'injustice *autrement* (οὐ γὰρ οἷόν τε ἄλλως, 525b4) que par la souffrance et les douleurs. L'*elenchos* n'est-il pas, au même titre que le châtiment, un moyen de débarrasser l'âme de son injustice? Étant donné que nous sommes en présence de fautes « guérissables » (ἰάσιμα) et que l'*elenchos* a précisément pour fonction de « guérir » l'âme de son ignorance, pourquoi ne pourrait-il pas délivrer ces hommes de leur injustice? Si Socrate faisait exclusivement référence au moyen d'être débarrassé de l'injustice dans l'Hadès, on pourrait à la rigueur admettre que l'*elenchos* n'est pas, dans l'Hadès, un moyen approprié pour débarrasser l'âme de son injustice. Or Socrate précise que c'est *ici* et dans l'Hadès (καὶ ἐνθάδε καὶ ἐν Ἅιδου, 525b8) que le châtiment, par le moyen de la souffrance et des douleurs, s'avère utile, de sorte que Socrate fait complètement l'impasse sur le rôle de l'*elenchos* ici-bas. Comme nous le verrons sous peu, ce n'est pas le seul passage du *Gorgias* où Socrate semble « oublier » l'*elenchos* et lui préférer tacitement le châtiment. Quoi qu'il en soit, la douleur n'est pas du tout indispensable pour que l'*elenchos* parvienne à son résultat, qui est également de délivrer de l'injustice. Non seulement l'*elenchos* ne s'accompagne pas de douleur et de souffrance pour celui qui le subit, mais il s'accompagne même de plaisir comme nous l'avons vu plus tôt (voir 458a).

Peu avant l'extrait du mythe qui vient d'être cité, Socrate fait une autre observation à propos du châtiment :

> Or, il convient à quiconque est sujet à être puni, et puni à bon droit par un autre, soit d'être amélioré par cette punition et d'y gagner (ἢ βελτίονι γίγνεσθαι καὶ ὀνίνασθαι), soit de servir d'exemple aux autres (ἢ παραδείγματι

24 Selon Brickhouse et Smith, celui qui a fait l'expérience de plaisirs intenses (« violent pleasures ») et qui considère qu'ils sont bons « needs punishment, for only the pain of punishment for a specific act of wrongdoing will free her from pleasure's control. » Brickhouse et Smith, « The problem of punishment, » 104.

> τοῖς ἄλλοις γίγνεσθαι), afin que ceux-ci, lui voyant subir les peines qu'il peut avoir à subir, soient pris de peur et s'améliorent (φοβούμενοι βελτίους γίγνωνται). (525b1–4)

Je vois dans ce passage deux autres divergences avec l'*elenchos*. La première concerne la première branche de l'alternative (ἢ … ἤ), où Socrate rapporte que le châtiment permet à celui qui le subit de devenir meilleur. Ce n'est pas le seul passage où Socrate affirme ainsi que l'homme qui a subi un châtiment mérité devient meilleur par le fait même d'avoir été châtié.[25] Sauf erreur de ma part, il ne me semble pas que l'individu soumis à l'*elenchos* devient meilleur du seul fait d'avoir été réfuté. La vertu consiste en effet en une connaissance et l'*elenchos* n'en transmet aucune. Dans la mesure où l'*elenchos* débarrasse l'âme de ses fausses opinions, il est une étape préalable à la transmission de la connaissance qui permet de devenir meilleur. Certes, Platon affirme parfois que l'*elenchos* a pour effet d'« assagir » celui qui lui est soumis,[26] de sorte que l'on pourrait croire que l'*elenchos* rend meilleur, mais cet assagissement résulte essentiellement de la prise de conscience de son ignorance, et non pas de l'acquisition de nouvelles connaissances propres à rendre vertueux.

La deuxième branche de l'alternative concerne l'exemplarité du châtiment et l'on y trouve une autre divergence avec l'*elenchos*. Ceux qui ont commis les plus grands crimes sont devenus incurables, de sorte qu'ils ne tirent aucun profit du châtiment. Il faut néanmoins les châtier car ils servent d'exemples négatifs et ceux qui assistent à leur châtiment peuvent eux-mêmes devenir meilleurs (βελτίους γίγνωνται, 525b4), non pas parce qu'ils ont été châtiés, mais parce que la peur de l'être suffit à les rendre meilleurs. Or l'*elenchos* ne comporte aucune exemplarité de cette nature. L'*elenchos* ne peut être profitable que si l'on reconnaît, à la suite d'une réfutation, que l'on ne possède pas la connaissance que l'on croyait détenir. Or l'homme complètement mauvais ne peut pas le reconnaître. Il ne sert donc à rien de le soumettre à l'*elenchos* car il n'en tirera aucun profit pour lui-même et, le réfuterait-on, sa réfutation n'a pas non plus d'exemplarité, c'est-à-dire que la réfutation d'un tel homme ne permettrait pas à ceux qui y assisteraient de devenir meilleurs, comme si la crainte d'être réfuté permettait à elle seule de devenir meilleur! Quel profit peut-on

25 Voir 477a5–b1 : « [Socrate] Ne devient-on pas meilleur quant à son âme (βελτίων τὴν ψυχὴν γίγνεται), à condition d'être châtié justement (εἴπερ δικαίως κολάζεται) ?—[Polos] : C'est au moins probable.—N'est-ce pas alors d'un mal de son âme qu'est débarrassé (κακίας ἄρα ψυχῆς ἀπαλλάττεται) celui qui paie la peine de sa faute ?—Oui.—Or, n'est-ce pas du mal le plus grand qu'il est débarrassé (τοῦ μεγίστου ἀπαλλάττεται κακοῦ) ? »

26 Voir *Charm.* 167a, *Tht.* 210b–c, *Soph.* 230d (cité *supra*, section 1).

attendre de la réfutation d'un homme complètement mauvais? La réfutation d'un tel homme risque d'ailleurs de ne pas être menée à terme, car il serait bien étonnant qu'il s'y prête de bonne grâce, si bien que personne ne tirerait le moindre profit d'un *elenchos* avorté.

Une autre divergence significative entre le châtiment et l'*elenchos* est l'affirmation répétée, de la part de Socrate, que celui qui subit un châtiment mérité paie ainsi sa faute (δίκην διδόναι).[27] Le châtiment est ainsi conçu comme la contrepartie justifiée d'une faute commise. Or l'*elenchos* ne peut en aucun cas être conçu comme un châtiment qui sanctionnerait une faute commise par le répondant. Si l'ignorance est involontaire, elle ne peut pas être une « faute » qu'il reviendrait à l'*elenchos* de sanctionner. L'ignorance est certes un mal, voire le plus grand mal, mais elle n'est pas pour autant une faute dont l'*elenchos* serait le juste châtiment. Le châtiment punit un *acte* commis par un homme coupable d'une injustice, alors que l'*elenchos* porte sur des *opinions* dont l'incompatibilité révèle l'ignorance de celui qui y adhère, et sans même qu'il ait commis quoi que ce soit de répréhensible.

Alors que je me suis efforcé de montrer que l'*elenchos* et le châtiment sont, d'un bout à l'autre du dialogue, deux moyens concurrents, et irréductibles l'un à l'autre, de délivrer l'âme du plus grand mal, R. G. Edmonds III conçoit le châtiment, tel qu'il est décrit dans le mythe, comme une illustration de l'*elenchos*,[28] de sorte qu'il n'y aurait pas d'opposition entre l'*elenchos* et le châtiment, puisque celui-ci serait une représentation imagée de celui-là. Cette interprétation me paraît erronée pour de nombreuses raisons. Premièrement, Edmonds III ne traite pas du tout du rapport entre l'*elenchos* et le châtiment

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27 Il y a de nombreuses occurrences de cette expression dans le *Gorgias* (voir 472e6, e7, 473b4, b7, d9, 474b4, 476a4, a7, d5, e2, 477a2, a7, 478a6, d4, e3, 479a1, a7, c1, d2, d5, e1, e3, e5, 480a8, 481a1, a3, 482b3, 486c3, 509b3, 510e8, 525b5, 527c1). Il est remarquable que *toutes* les occurrences de cette expression, à l'exception d'une seule (486c3), sont placées dans la bouche de Socrate. Est-ce vraiment pour se faire comprendre de ses interlocuteurs, ainsi que Rowe le suggère (« A problem in the *Gorgias*, » 34), que Socrate emploie le vocabulaire du châtiment alors même qu'il traite en réalité de l'*elenchos*? Il est permis d'en douter. Si Socrate n'hésite pas à expliquer longuement à Polos en quoi l'*elenchos* qu'il pratique se distingue de l'*elenchos* rhétorique (voir 471d–472c), pourquoi camouflerait-il la fonction correctrice de l'*elenchos* sous le lexique du châtiment?

28 Voir Edmonds III, « Whip scars, » 166 : « Plato carefully manipulates the traditional mythic details in his tale of an afterlife judgement to provide an illustration, in vivid and graphic terms, of the working of the Socratic *elenchos*. » Sur le mythe comme « illustration » de l'*elenchos*, voir aussi 168, 171, 173, 174, 183–184. Voir aussi Shaw, « Punishment and psychology, » 94 : « The pain involved in post-mortem punishment, then, is much the same as the pain experienced in Socratic refutation or rebuke. » Shaw ne fait cependant aucune référence à l'étude d'Edmonds III. La même interprétation est également esquissée par Rowe, « A problem in the *Gorgias*, » 35.

dans la section qui précède le mythe. Or les nombreux passages sur le châtiment, avant le mythe, ne peuvent pas être interprétés comme des représentations imagées de l'*elenchos*. Deuxièmement, Edmonds III a certes raison de rapprocher le refus des témoins, dans l'*elenchos* dialectique, avec l'interdiction pour l'âme d'être accompagnée par des témoins lorsqu'elle comparaît devant les juges (523d–e), mais il établit ensuite, entre l'*elenchos* et le châtiment, d'autres correspondances qui me paraissent abusives. Par exemple, il soutient que « the examination of the naked soul by the judge corresponds to the analysis of the person's ideas and the pointing out of the inconsistencies ».[29] Or comme je m'appliquerai à le montrer sous peu, le face à face entre l'âme du juge et celle du défunt ne donne lieu à aucun échange dialectique au terme duquel le juge mettrait en lumière les contradictions du défunt. Autre exemple : Edmonds III soutient que « The suffering in the afterlife corresponds to the shame of the *elenchos* ».[30] Là encore, il me paraît abusif d'établir cette correspondance car Socrate souligne au contraire, dans le *Gorgias*, le plaisir d'être réfuté (458a). Certes, les interlocuteurs de Socrate n'éprouvent pas tous du plaisir à être réfutés, mais un interlocuteur raisonnable devrait, comme Socrate,[31] éprouver du plaisir[32] lorsqu'il est délivré, par le moyen de l'*elenchos*, du plus grand mal. Enfin, Edmonds III soutient que lorsqu'on est en présence d'une âme incurable, l'*elenchos* possède la même exemplarité que le châtiment, c'est-à-dire qu'il permet à ceux qui y assistent de se réformer et de devenir meilleurs.[33] Or non seulement il n'y a aucun passage du *Gorgias* ou des dialogues socratiques de Platon qui exprime expressément une telle exemplarité de l'*elenchos*,[34] mais

29 Edmonds III, « Whip scars, » 184. Voir aussi 171, 172–173.

30 Edmonds III, « Whip scars, » 184. Voir aussi 166 : « the afterlife punishments prescribed for the wrong-doers depict the suffering that the shame of the *elenchos* inflicts. » Selon Edmonds III (ibid. 174), l'*elenchos* est une « bitter medicine, painful and unpleasant to swallow ». Voir aussi ibid. 177.

31 Dans l'*Euthydème*, Socrate reconnaît à nouveau que l'*elenchos* est une source de plaisir pour celui qui en fait l'objet : « Mais certainement, repartis-je, rien ne me sera plus agréable que d' être réfuté (Ἀλλὰ μήν, ἦν δ᾽ ἐγώ, ἥδιστα ταῦτα ἐξελέγχομαι). » (295a6 ; trad. Robin légèrement modifiée).

32 Dans le *Lachès*, Nicias reconnaît qu'il n'éprouve aucun déplaisir lorsqu'il est mis à l'épreuve par Socrate : « Pour moi donc, il n'y a rien de déplacé ni même de déplaisant (οὐδὲν ἄηθες οὐδ᾽ ἀηδὲς) à être mis à l'épreuve par Socrate (ὑπὸ Σωκράτους βασανίζεσθαι). » (188b). Voir aussi *Ménon* 84a–c.

33 Edmonds III, « Whip scars, » 178 : « The *elenchos* cannot cure those who refuse to accept the treatment and to adapt their lives to the conclusions of the argument, but the spectacle of their suffering may nevertheless induce others reform themselves. » Voir aussi ibid. 179, 184.

34 Lorsque Platon décrit l'effet de l'*elenchos* sur les auditeurs, il mentionne le plaisir qu'ils éprouvent à voir l'interlocuteur être réfuté (voir *Apol.* 23c, *Soph.* 230c, cité *supra*, 118–119).

c'est Xénophon, et non pas Platon, qui affirme à plusieurs reprises qu'un entretien avec Socrate ne profitait pas moins aux auditeurs qu'à l'interlocuteur de Socrate.[35] Le châtiment, que ce soit celui du mythe ou celui du dialogue qui le précède, n'est pas une métaphore de l'*elenchos*, mais un moyen concurrent, et opposé, de délivrer l'âme du plus grand mal.

Malgré ce qui les distingue, l'*elenchos* et le châtiment sont deux moyens de se délivrer – c'est-à-dire de délivrer son âme – du plus grand mal. Mais en vertu de quoi usera-t-on de l'un de préférence à l'autre? Autrement dit, qu'est-ce qui permet de déterminer ce qui, de l'*elenchos* ou du châtiment, est le moyen le plus approprié pour se délivrer du mal? Cette question n'est jamais abordée pour elle-même dans le *Gorgias*, mais il y a au moins trois passages, en plus de 525b, qui semblent accorder une préférence au châtiment. En 478e, Socrate affirme que l'homme qui est délivré du mal (ὁ ἀπαλλατόμενος, 478e2) vient au second rang des hommes heureux, immédiatement après l'homme dont l'âme est exempte de mal. Or cet homme qui a été délivré du mal, « c'est celui à qui l'on fait des remontrances, à qui l'on tape sur les doigts, et qui paie la peine de sa faute (Οὗτος δ᾽ ἦν ὁ νουθετούμενός τε καὶ ἐπιπληττόμενος καὶ δίκην διδούς, 478e3–4) ». Ce passage appelle deux observations : premièrement, il est plutôt curieux que Socrate mette les remontrances sur le même pied que le châtiment physique, comme si elles avaient exactement la même efficacité que le châtiment.[36] Mais si tel est le cas, pourquoi ne pas avoir mentionné également l'*elenchos*? L'absence de l'*elenchos* est d'autant plus étonnante que Socrate reconnaît, dans le *Gorgias* même, que l'*elenchos* délivre du mal, alors qu'il ne l'a jamais reconnu, avant ce passage-ci, à propos des remontrances. Deuxièmement, en reconnaissant que les remontrances délivrent du mal, Socrate leur reconnaît la même efficacité que l'*elenchos*, comme si l'*elenchos* et les remontrances étaient deux moyens équivalents de délivrer du mal par

Dans l'*Apologie* (23c), les jeunes gens qui assistent aux réfutations conduites par Socrate s'empressent ensuite de réfuter à leur tour, mais rien ne permet de conclure qu'ils sont devenus meilleurs du seul fait d'assister à un *elenchos*.

35 Voir *Mem.* I 2, 29–30; I 3, 8–9; II 5, 1–2 ; III 14, 2–4; IV 2, 1–7.

36 Les remontrances sont également mises sur le même pied que le châtiment dans le passage suivant : « [Socrate] Donc celui qui a la pire existence, c'est celui qui a en lui de l'injustice et qui n'en a point été débarrassé (μὴ ἀπαλλαττόμενος).—[Polos] Évidemment.—[Socrate] Mais cette condition n'est-elle pas justement celle de l'homme dont l'existence se passerait à commettre les pires injustices, à pratiquer une injustice consommée, de façon à n'encourir ni remontrances (μήτε νουθετεῖσθαι), ni châtiments (μήτε κολάζεσθαι), et à ne pas payer la peine de ses crimes (μήτε δίκην διδόναι) […] ? » (478e–479a).

le moyen de la parole.[37] Cette équivalence entre la remontrance et l'*elenchos* ne laisse pas d'étonner si l'on considère que l'Étranger les oppose l'une à l'autre dans le *Sophiste*, voyant dans la première une ancienne méthode d'éducation inefficace, et dans le second une nouvelle *paideia* beaucoup plus efficace :

> L'un de ces procédés, héritage de nos pères et que son ancienneté rend vénérable, consistait principalement de leur part (et c'est ainsi qu'en usent bien des gens encore aujourd'hui), lorsque leurs fils avaient, à leur avis, commis quelque faute, tantôt à les traiter rudement et tantôt à mettre dans les avertissements qu'ils leur donnaient une mollesse excessive (τὰ μὲν χαλεπαίνοντες, τὰ δὲ μαλθακωτέρως παραμυθούμενοι). Quoi qu'il en soit, le nom le plus juste à donner à cela dans son ensemble, serait celui d'« art d'admonestation » (νουθετητικήν). [Théétète] C'est exact.—[L'Étranger] Passons maintenant à l'autre procédé. Il a inversement paru bon à certains, une fois qu'ils s'en sont expliqués avec eux-mêmes, de juger que toute incompréhension est involontaire et que celui qui se croira du talent en quelque chose ne consentira jamais à s'instruire de ce qu'il croit savoir; que du reste, après s'être donné beaucoup de peine, la forme admonestative de l'éducation obtient un bien mince résultat (μετὰ δὲ πολλοῦ πόνου τὸ νουθετητικὸν εἶδος τῆς παιδείας σμικρὸν ἀνύτειν).—[Théétète] Oui, ils ont raison d'en juger ainsi!—[L'Étranger] Le fait certain, c'est qu'ils s'y prennent d'une autre manière, celle qui vise à expulser l'opinion dont il s'agit (ταύτης τῆς δόξης ἐπὶ ἐκβολήν). (229e–230b)

L'admonestation (νουθετητικήν, 230a3; τὸ νουθετητικὸν εἶδος, 230a8–9), ou remontrance, est l'ancienne méthode qui se révèle inefficace lorsqu'il s'agit d'*expulser* l'opinion (ταύτης τῆς δόξης ἐπὶ ἐκβολήν, 230b1), enracinée en l'âme, qui fait croire à cette dernière qu'elle sait ce qu'en réalité elle ne sait pas. Le but recherché est exactement le même que dans le *Gorgias*, à savoir débarrasser l'âme des fausses opinions qui font obstacle à la vertu. La nouvelle méthode préconisée par l'Étranger est l'*elenchos*, qui se révèle beaucoup plus efficace pour expulser les fausses opinions et en délivrer celui qui les abrite. Il s'ensuit, selon ce passage du *Sophiste*, et contrairement à ce que Socrate affirme dans le *Gorgias*, que la remontrance est impuissante à délivrer un homme du mal.

37 C'est exactement la position de Shaw, qui associe souvent le reproche et la réfutation (« rebuke and refutation »), comme s'ils étaient deux formes équivalentes de « châtiment discursif ». « Punishment and psychology, » 76, 77, 87, 94, 95).

Le deuxième passage où Socrate accorde tacitement une préférence au châtiment est 480a–b. Socrate y affirme que s'il arrive à un homme de commettre une injustice, ce n'est pas à la rhétorique qu'il doit faire appel, puisqu'il doit au contraire se rendre le plus rapidement possible chez un juge pour obtenir la punition qui guérira son âme :

> L'injustice, d'autre part, est-elle commise (ἐὰν δέ γε ἀδικήσῃ), que ce soit par nous-même, que ce soit par quelqu'un d'autre qui soit l'objet de notre sollicitude, alors on doit volontairement (ἑκόντα) aller où, le plus vite possible, on paiera la peine (δώσει δίκην) de sa faute, chez le juge comme on irait chez le médecin, s'appliquant ainsi à éviter que ne s'invétère la maladie de l'injustice et que l'âme, gangrenée sous la cicatrice, ne soit par là rendue incurable (ἀνίατον). (480a6–b2)

Mais pourquoi Socrate ne recommande-t-il pas plutôt à cet homme de se rendre chez le dialecticien pour se soumettre à l'*elenchos* qui le guérira de son injustice? Comme nous l'avons vu plus tôt, l'*elenchos* n'a pas moins, à l'endroit de l'âme, de vertu thérapeutique ou curative que le châtiment. Le fait même que Socrate n'évoque pas la possibilité que cet homme puisse être « guéri » par les soins de l'*elenchos* semble indiquer une préférence tacite pour le châtiment.

Le troisième passage qui peut également être interprété dans le sens d'une préférence pour le châtiment est le mythe final du *Gorgias*. La finalité du châtiment infligé à l'âme, après la mort, est bien de la débarrasser de l'injustice (525b4–c1). Mais ne serait-il pas étrange de confier à l'*elenchos* cette mission? Peut-être pas autant qu'il peut le paraître à première vue. Dans le récit du mythe, Socrate prête à Zeus les propos suivants :

> … c'est une fois morts, en effet, qu'ils devront être jugés, et le juge devra, lui aussi, avoir été mis à nu et être un mort, qui, avec sa seule âme, est spectateur d'une âme pareillement seule (αὐτῇ τῇ ψυχῇ αὐτὴν τὴν ψυχὴν θεωροῦντα), celle de chacun, à l'instant où il vient de mourir : un mort qui est isolé de toute sa parenté et qui a laissé sur la terre tout ce dont il se parait; condition indispensable de la justice de sa décision. (523e2–6)

Ce face-à-face entre l'âme du juge et celle du défunt est éminemment propice à un examen dialectique qui permettrait à l'âme du juge, telle la pierre de touche évoquée par Socrate en 486d, de révéler la véritable nature de l'âme du défunt et de la débarrasser, le cas échéant, de l'injustice qui corrompt son âme. Le récit du mythe n'évoque cependant jamais une forme d'échange entre l'âme du défunt et celle du juge. Tout se passe en fait comme s'il suffisait à cette dernière

de *voir* (θεωροῦντα, 523e4) l'âme du défunt pour connaître aussitôt son véritable état. Le jugement ne procède donc pas d'un échange, mais d'une simple observation.[38]

La pratique de l'*elenchos*, après la mort, n'a rien d'étrange pour peu que l'on se rappelle que Socrate évoque lui-même cette possibilité dans l'*Apologie* :

> Mais le plus intéressant, c'est que je pourrais, en conversant avec eux, soumettre les gens de là-bas à mon examen (τοὺς ἐκεῖ ἐξετάζοντα) et à mon enquête, tout comme avec ceux d'ici (ὥσπερ τοὺς ἐνταῦθα), pour savoir qui d'entre eux est sage, et qui se figure qu'il l'est, sans l'être réellement. Or, à quel prix ne voudrait-on pas, vous, Citoyens qui êtes juges, pouvoir soumettre à l'examen (ἐξετάσαι) celui qui a conduit devant Troie l'immense armée, ou bien Ulysse, ou encore Sisyphe, des milliers d'autres aussi, femmes et hommes, que l'on pourrait nommer; avec qui ce serait le comble du bonheur là-bas, et de s'entretenir (οἷς ἐκεῖ διαλέγεσθαι), et de faire société, et de procéder à un examen (ἐξετάζειν)? (41b–c)

Les trois occurrences du verbe ἐξετάζειν, dans ce passage, confirment hors de tout doute que Socrate songe à un contexte dialectique où il appliquerait l'*elenchos* aux âmes des défunts. Il n'y a donc rien d'étrange à imaginer que l'on puisse, après la mort, soumettre une âme à l'*elenchos* et l'on assiste en fait, entre l'*Apologie* et le *Gorgias*, à un véritable renversement : alors que Socrate, dans l'*Apologie*, évoque une pratique de l'*elenchos* qui s'adresse aussi bien à ceux d'ici (τοὺς ἐνταῦθα) qu'à ceux dans l'Hadès (ἐκεῖ), mais sans jamais évoquer la possibilité d'un châtiment, le même (?) Socrate, dans le *Gorgias*, fait l'impasse sur la pratique de l'*elenchos* après la mort et réserve au châtiment seul, ici-bas et dans l'Hadès (καὶ ἐνθάδε καὶ ἐν Ἅιδου, 525b8), le soin de débarrasser l'âme de son injustice.

On peut proposer deux explications pour rendre compte de la présence, dans le *Gorgias*, de deux moyens concurrents, et également approuvés par Socrate, pour se délivrer du mal. Premièrement, l'emploi de l'un plutôt que de l'autre dépendrait en fait des circonstances. Dans un contexte privé, où l'on discute avec un homme qui est manifestement ignorant de la justice, on peut avoir recours à l'*elenchos* pour le délivrer de son ignorance et éviter ainsi qu'il ne commette d'autres injustices. Dans un contexte public, un homme qui a commis une injustice et qui a été reconnu coupable ne peut éviter la sanction qui est prévue par la loi et qui consiste souvent en une forme de punition

38 Le terme θεωροῦντα (523e4) est par la suite repris par plusieurs termes qui font également référence à la vue qui permet au juge de jauger exactement l'âme du défunt (voir θεᾶται, 524e2; κατεῖδεν, 524e4; ἰδών, 525a6; εἰσιδών, 526c1).

physique. Certes, Socrate pourrait contester l'efficacité du châtiment pour délivrer l'âme de l'injustice, mais force est de reconnaître qu'il ne le fait pas et qu'il attribue au châtiment la même efficacité, voire une plus grande efficacité, qu'à l'*elenchos*. L'explication par les circonstances prête néanmoins le flanc à cette objection : l'homme qui a commis une injustice, selon 480a–b, n'a pas encore été saisi par la justice, de sorte qu'il avait le choix de se rendre chez le dialecticien plutôt que chez le juge. Rien ne le contraint à se rendre chez le juge et Socrate précise même qu'il y va de son plein gré (ἑκόντα, 480a7). Deuxièmement, le choix de l'*elenchos*, ou du châtiment, dépendrait non pas des circonstances, mais du rapport de force au sein de l'âme de l'individu qu'il faut délivrer du mal. À ma connaissance, aucun commentateur n'a jusqu'à maintenant établi un lien entre, d'une part, la reconnaissance, dans le *Gorgias* (493a–b), d'une bipartition de l'âme,[39] et, d'autre part, les deux moyens – châtiment et *elenchos* – de délivrer une âme du plus grand mal. Avant la reconnaissance de la bipartition de l'âme, l'*elenchos* est un moyen suffisant pour guérir et délivrer l'âme de son ignorance. Mais à partir du moment où Socrate reconnaît que certains hommes ne se gouvernent pas eux-mêmes (voir *Grg*. 491c–e), dans la mesure où la partie rationnelle de leur âme est dominée par la partie désirante, il est inutile, avec de tels hommes, de faire appel à l'*elenchos* pour les délivrer de leur injustice, car le recours à l'*elenchos* n'est efficace qu'avec des hommes qui peuvent entendre raison, c'est-à-dire qui ne sont pas sous la domination de la partie désirante de leur âme. Le choix de l'*elenchos* ou du châtiment dépendrait donc de l'élément – raison ou désir – qui domine dans l'âme de celui qu'il faut délivrer du mal. Dans la mesure où j'établis un lien étroit entre une innovation propre au *Gorgias*, soit l'introduction d'une bipartition de l'âme, et l'existence correspondante de deux moyens (*elenchos* et châtiment) pour délivrer l'âme du mal, ma position se distingue nettement de celle qui soutient que le recours au châtiment peut être justifié au sein même du cadre intellectualiste des premiers dialogues.[40]

4 Conclusion

Il semble y avoir, en plus de l'*elenchos* et du châtiment, un troisième moyen de délivrer du mal, de sorte que le partage entre l'*elenchos* (prédominance de la partie rationnelle) et le châtiment (prédominance de la partie désirante)

39 Sur la bipartition de l'âme dans le *Gorgias*, voir L.-A. Dorion, « *Enkrateia* and the partition of the soul in the *Gorgias*, » dans *Plato and the Divided Self*, éd. R. Barney, T. Brennan et Ch. Brittain (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2012) : 38–50.

40 C'est la position défendue par Brickhouse and Smith, « Incurable souls, » 35.

n'épuiserait pas tous les cas où il est possible de délivrer du mal. En 504d–e, Socrate décrit ainsi la tâche du véritable orateur, de l'orateur qu'il appelle de ses vœux :

> Or, c'est avec les yeux fixés sur ces qualités de l'âme que l'orateur en question (ὁ ῥήτωρ ἐκεῖνος), celui qui a compétence et moralité (ὁ τεχνικός τε καὶ ἀγαθός), appliquera aux âmes, et les discours qu'il tiendra, et absolument toutes les actions qu'il accomplira; s'il fait à ses concitoyens quelque présent ou qu'il leur impose quelque sacrifice, en leur faisant ce présent, en leur demandant ce sacrifice (καὶ δῶρον ἐάν τι διδῷ, δώσει, καὶ ἐάν τι ἀφαιρῆται, ἀφαιρήσεται), sa pensée visera toujours à produire la justice en leurs âmes et à débarrasser celles-ci de l'injustice (δικαιοσύνη μὲν ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς γίγηται, ἀδικία δὲ ἀπαλλάττηται), à y faire naître la tempérance et à les débarrasser de l'incontinence (καὶ σωφροσύνη μὲν ἐγγίγνηται, ἀκολασία δὲ ἀπαλλάττηται), à y faire naître toute autre excellence et s'éloigner l'immoralité (καὶ ἡ ἄλλη ἀρετὴ ἐγγίγνηται, κακία δὲ ἀπίῃ). (504d5–e3)

Cet important passage mérite plusieurs observations :

i) L'expression καὶ δῶρον ἐάν τι διδῷ, δώσει, καὶ ἐάν τι ἀφαιρῆται, ἀφαιρήσεται (504d7–8) est ainsi comprise par Dodds[41] : « Socrates is presumably thinking on the one hand of payment for various forms of public service (cf. on 515e4–7), on the other of taxation and λειτουργίαι, and is saying that fiscal policy should be governed by social policy and should not be treated as a vote-catching expedient. » Ce détour historique et ces références à la fiscalité athénienne me paraissent inutiles car Socrate fait en réalité référence, en 504d7–8, à ce qui suit immédiatement. Ce que l'orateur « donne » (δῶρον … διδῷ, δώσει) au peuple, ce sont en effet les vertus qui sont mentionnées dans les lignes suivantes (δικαιοσύνη, 504e1; σωφροσύνη, e2; ἡ ἄλλη ἀρετὴ, e3) et ce qu'il leur « enlève » (καὶ ἐάν τι ἀφαιρῆται, ἀφαιρήσεται), ce sont les vices qui sont également mentionnés dans les lignes suivantes (ἀδικία, 504e1; ἀκολασία, e2; κακία, e3).[42]

ii) Lorsque Socrate décrit l'opération par laquelle le bon orateur « enlève » (ἀφαιρῆται, ἀφαιρήσεται) les vices logés dans l'âme des citoyens, il emploie deux fois le verbe ἀπαλλάττομαι (ἀπαλλάττηται, 504e1, e3) et une fois le verbe ἄπειμι (ἀπίῃ, 504e3). Les deux occurrences du verbe ἀπαλλάττομαι sont évidemment du plus grand intérêt, d'autant plus que les vices qui sont l'objet de ce verbe, soit l'injustice (ἀδικία, 504e1) et le dérèglement

41 *Gorgias*, 330 *ad* 504d8.

42 Pour une autre lecture de 504d7–8, voir Jamie Dow dans ce volume (pages 66–68).

(ἀκολασία, 504e2) ont déjà été associés au même verbe plus tôt dans le dialogue.[43]

iii) Et par quel moyen le bon orateur débarrasse-t-il de l'injustice et du dérèglement l'âme de ses concitoyens? Est-ce par le châtiment? C'est peu probable, car il n'appartient pas à l'orateur d'administrer les châtiments et l'on ne voit pas comment il pourrait, à lui seul, châtier tous ses concitoyens qui doivent être délivrés du mal. Est-ce alors par l'*elenchos*? Pas davantage, car l'*elenchos* s'adresse forcément à un homme seul et il est donc impossible que l'orateur puisse réfuter un à un tous ses concitoyens pour les débarrasser à tour de rôle de l'injustice, du dérèglement et de toute autre forme de vice. Il s'agit donc, semble-t-il, d'une autre forme de discours, qui s'adresse collectivement à l'ensemble des citoyens, et dont l'efficacité semble supérieure à celle de l'*elenchos* et du châtiment, puisque le discours de cet orateur a une double vertu : non seulement il débarrasse les âmes de l'injustice, du dérèglement et de toute autre forme de vice, mais il fait également naître dans les âmes la justice, la modération et les autres vertus. Le discours de l'orateur véritable est donc supérieur à l'*elenchos*, en ce que celui-ci ne peut que délivrer du mal, et supérieur également au châtiment, puisque ce dernier peut difficilement, à lui seul, transmettre la vertu.

iv) Enfin, faut-il considérer, à la suite de Dodds,[44] que « cet orateur » (ὁ ῥήτωρ ἐκεῖνος, 504d5) compétent et bon correspond en fait à Socrate lui-même? Si Socrate soutenait, dans ce passage, que le bon orateur implante réellement la justice, la modération et toute autre forme de vertu dans les âmes de ses concitoyens, on pourrait immédiatement objecter que Socrate en est incapable puisqu'il se déclare ignorant de ce en quoi consistent ces différentes vertus. Autrement dit, il faudrait que Socrate se soit émancipé de son ignorance pour être en mesure d'accomplir cette tâche. Mais si on lit attentivement le texte, Socrate n'affirme pas que cet orateur implante ces vertus dans les âmes de ses concitoyens, mais plutôt qu'il n'a de cesse de réfléchir à la façon (πρὸς τοῦτο ἀεὶ τὸν νοῦν ἔχων, ὅπως ..., 504d9) dont on peut faire naître ces différentes vertus. Or une telle tâche est non seulement parfaitement compatible avec la déclaration d'ignorance de Socrate, mais elle correspond également à sa préoccupation constante

43 Voir 478a8–b1 : « La chrématistique délivre donc de la pauvreté, la médecine de la maladie, et le châtiment du dérèglement (Χρηματιστικὴ μὲν ἄρα πενίας ἀπαλλάττει ἰατρικὴ δὲ νόσου, δίκη δὲ ἀκολασίας καὶ ἀδικίας) »; 480d5–6 : « ils délivrent du plus grand mal, l'injustice (ἀπαλλάτωνται τοῦ μεγίστου κακοῦ, ἀδικίας) ».

44 *Gorgias*, 330 *ad* 504d5.

dans les dialogues.[45] Mais ce qui demeure néanmoins indéterminé et incertain, en 504d–e, c'est le moyen par lequel le bon orateur parviendra à débarrasser les âmes de ses concitoyens des différents vices qui constituent, pour l'homme, le plus grand mal.

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45 Contrairement à J. Dow, je considère que la description du « bon orateur », en 504d–e, est un auto-portrait de Socrate.

CHAPTER 7

The Perils of Phronesis: Socrates' Understanding of Excellence in Plato's *Gorgias*

Emilia Cucinotta

Abstract

This paper focuses on the portrayal of the completely good man, stemming from Socrates' understanding of excellence as *kosmos*. On account of both the pivotal role attributed to *sophrosune* and the striking absence of any reference to *phronesis* in his model of the virtuous individual, scholars have identified a shift in Plato's characterisation of Socrates in the *Gorgias*, from defending the standard claim that virtue is knowledge to elaborating an understanding of excellence as psychic orderliness. Yet a close examination of Socrates' craft analogy argument (503d5–505c9), upon which the conception of excellence as *kosmos* depends, will show that the former's understanding of excellence as *kosmos* is consistent with the notion that virtue is knowledge.

Keywords

phronesis – orderliness – hedonism – craft analogy – geometric proportion

1 Introduction

Like the captain of a sailboat forced to change course with the varying winds, the interpreter of the *Gorgias* is called upon to continuously change perspective with respect to both the object and the method of investigation. This feature of the dialogue has led scholars to speak of a lack of cohesion, which in turn creates uncertainty about Plato's main purpose in writing the *Gorgias*.[1] In addition, readers must take into account modern interpreters' views on the effectiveness of Socrates' arguments, the coherence of his statements in relation to

1 As noted by Devin Stauffer, *The Unity of Plato's Gorgias: Rhetoric, Justice and the Philosophic Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3–6 and n. 8.

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004701878_008

different treatments of the same issues elsewhere within the Platonic corpus, and Plato's supposed departures from the historical Socrates.[2]

The *Gorgias* is articulated into three distinct *logoi*, arranged in sequence, in order to develop a coherent argument.[3] This sequence starts with the discussion with Gorgias about the definition of rhetoric as the art of persuasion, that has acquittal in lawcourts and success in politics as its main purpose; it then moves, with the shift of interlocutor to Polus, to a reflection on the supposed happiness deriving from the unethical use of rhetoric; and it concludes with an investigation into the best way of life in discussion with Callicles. Each of the ethical issues raised in the conversations with Gorgias and Polus – which are all developed in Socrates' confrontation with Callicles – is to be understood with reference to the set of values stemming from Callicles' hedonistic stance, which represents the contemporary backdrop for both Gorgias' utilitarian view of rhetoric and Polus' defence of injustice. The wide range of uses made of the dialogue form – the 'Delphic' interview with the rhetorician Gorgias about his craft, the *elenchos* of Polus' theorisation of injustice, the *agon* with Callicles on human excellence and the right way of life, the mimetic monologue through which Socrates imitates the actual dialogue after Callicles' withdrawal, and then, after Callicles' return, what can be considered on the whole a continuous speech (*makrologia*), culminating in Socrates' account of the destiny of souls in the afterlife – all closely follow variations in the argumentative structure of the work. In this labyrinthine architecture, the reader proceeds as if wandering through a dark wood, encountering along the way matters of intense debate among scholars, mainly concerning Plato's complex treatment of the Socratic paradoxes and his supposed departure from the historical Socrates' views – assuming that those views can be identified. Yet the wide-ranging route of Socrates' vessel, driven by the changing winds of his interlocutors' arguments, should not distract us from the deeper meaning of the simile of sailing: despite the numerous adjustments to the course of the dialogue, Socrates' destination always remains the same, the consistent and safe (albeit temporary, until

2 See the harsh criticism of Terence Irwin, which has exercised considerable influence: "The *Gorgias* is a puzzling and unsatisfactory dialogue, because it attempts ambitious tasks with the inadequate resources of the Socratic theory […] Plato eventually decides that these problems are too severe, and that the theory itself needs radical revision." T. Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory: The Early and Middle Dialogues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 131.

3 Erwin Sonderegger, "Zur Funktion der Personenwechsels im Gorgias," *Museum Helveticum* 69,2 (2012), shows how the four themes at the heart of the dialogue (rhetoric, the relationship between power and justice, the best conduct of life, the attitude toward death) traverse the dialogue well beyond the boundaries of the sections with Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles.

proven otherwise) port of call of philosophical *logoi* bearing on the life most worth living.

In light of this, I will address here the issue that Socrates himself claims to be the most beautiful of all and to which he strongly commits in the *Gorgias*: namely, what a man ought to be like, and what he ought to practice and for how long in both youth and old age. Following Socrates in the finest of all possible inquiries he undertakes with Callicles about the life most worth living, I will focus on Socrates' portrayal of the completely good man, which results from an understanding of excellence as *kosmos*. On account of both the pivotal role attributed to *sophrosune* as the primary virtue and the striking absence of *phronesis* in Socrates' account of the virtuous individual, scholars – from William Thompson[4] to David Sedley[5] – have pointed to a shift in Plato's characterization of Socrates, from the standard claim that virtue is knowledge to a definition of excellence as psychic orderliness. Yet a close reading of the craft analogy argument that Socrates uses to refute Callicles' definition of excellence as "intemperance" (*akolasia*) shows that Socrates' understanding of excellence as *kosmos* is consistent with the Socratic thesis that virtue is knowledge.

I will start my analysis (section 2) from Socrates' exchange with Callicles, just after the latter's Great Speech, where Callicles – pressed by Socrates' questioning – expresses his stance that justice is the natural right of superior men to rule and have a greater share – with superiority understood to refer to intelligence and courage alone – and that the best way of life is a life involving the limitless fulfilment of desires, upon which Callicles' definition of excellence as luxury, intemperance and freedom depends. I will then (section 3) focus on the interlude after Callicles' withdrawal, during which Socrates, recapitulating on his own the conclusions of the preceding cross-examination, defines his understanding of excellence as relating to the order in an individual's soul, which is then followed by a portrayal of the virtuous individual in which all of the so-called cardinal virtues appear except intelligence. I will argue against the possibility of a non-intellectualistic reading of Socrates' account of virtues by framing it in its wider argumentative context, where it appears both as the outcome and the completion of Socrates' craft analogy argument as applied to the craft of ruling: the craft analogy narrows the scope of the politician's task in producing virtuous citizens by restricting it to only those virtues which can be produced by the craft of ruling, from which intelligence *qua* innate virtue is

4 William H. Thompson, *The Gorgias of Plato* (London: Whittaker, 1871), IX–X.

5 David Sedley, "The Unity of Virtue after the Protagoras," in *Unité et origine des vertus dans la philosophie ancienne,* eds. Bernard Collette-Dučić and Sylvain Delcomminette (Bruxelles: Editions Ousia, 2014), 72–77.

excluded. In order to illuminate the distinction between intelligence as innate virtue and all of the other ethical virtues which are not innate but acquired later, I will refer (in section 4) to the passage from *Republic* VII 518c4–519b5 where Socrates marks this very distinction, when he distinguishes the innate virtue of reasoning from the other non-innate ethical virtues acquired by habit and practices. This distinction is mirrored in the ethical education of citizens in the Kallipolis and the philosophical education of those chosen to become philosopher-kings, whose supplementary education addresses intelligence not as a virtue to be bred but as a faculty to be oriented toward the Good.

The claim that the order-based portrayal of the virtuous individual in the interlude should be framed within Socrates' knowledge-based conception of virtue is supported by the immediately following reference to the knowledge of geometry as a metaphor for the knowledge of the good and bad (section 5). Set against Callicles' praise of intemperance and championship of having a disproportionate share of things, the notion of geometric equality is here put forward as the universal principle that enables the understanding of the correct proportion between conflicting elements: the universal common ratio – which establishes orderliness between heaven and earth, gods and men, as well as among men themselves – sheds light on knowledge of the correct proportion between the body and the soul implied in Socrates' reference to the *soma-sema* theory. The implications of the body-as-grave simile – which Socrates only hints at in his first set of arguments, due to Callicles' reluctance to challenge his hedonistic point of view – are fully developed in the *Phaedo* (section 6), where the philosophical disposition of Socrates' interlocutors makes it possible to address the body-soul dualism in full, by considering the body, with its needs, affections and desires, as an obstacle to – and even an evil for – the cognitive life of the soul.

In closing (section 7), I will underline how the results which Socrates achieves through his question-and-answer method, whether aporetic or positive, vary in relation to the argument's premises, which, in turn, depend on both dialogical contexts and disposition of interlocutors.

2 Socrates' Reply to Callicles' Great Speech: The Finest of All Possible Inquiries

In answer to Callicles' Great Speech, Socrates makes two preliminary observations, both of which serve as keys to interpreting the remainder of the dialogue. The first remark relates to the uniqueness of his interlocutor as a "godsend" (*hermaion*): a touchstone that tests Socrates' soul (*Grg.* 486d1–e3)

and the correctness of his beliefs (486e5–487a3; 487d7–e7).[6] Socrates' second remark is a reply to Callicles' criticism of his own way of life, the life of a useless and helpless second Amphion:[7] in other words, a critique of a life spent immersed in philosophy, neglecting both the duties and benefits of the active political life. Callicles' criticism, Socrates claims, has led the conversation to the "finest of all possible inquiries" (πάντων δὲ καλλίστη ἐστὶν ἡ σκέψις) about what a man ought to be like (ποῖόν τινα χρὴ εἶναι τὸν ἄνδρα), and what he ought to practice and for how long, in both youth and old age (487e7–488a2). As the following section on the nature of excellence in Callicles' superior man reveals, Socrates is about to widen the perspective of Callicles' Great Speech, from a focus mainly on the pursuits of the two different kinds of life to the qualities of the man who leads each of these lives. A clue about this change in direction is provided by the term *poios*, which evokes those distinctive qualities from which beliefs and actions derive. In order to determine what sort of a man Callicles has in mind, Socrates asks him to explain what he means by a "better" (*beltion*) and "superior" (*kreitton*) man, and whether "the better" (*to beltion*), "the superior" (*to kreitton*), and "the stronger" (*to ischuroteron*) are synonyms (488b2–d4). After a heated and inconclusive confrontation (489d5–e7), Socrates asks whether, in speaking of "better" and "superior" men, he is alluding to the "more intelligent" (*phronimoteroi*). Callicles agrees to this, as if it were the definition he had had in mind all along.[8] As a result of Socrates' further questioning, Callicles sketches an outline of the excellent man according to what he conceives of as natural justice (490a1–491d3): the "superior" men who deserve to rule and to have a greater share are those who are "intelligent" and "wise" (*phronimoi*) in the city's affairs, and know how to govern; they must also be "courageous" (*andreioi*), that is, capable of accomplishing what they

6 For Callicles as an "especially suitable interlocutor" to pursue the truth on account of his "anti-conventional position" see Terence Irwin, *Plato's Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 102. See also Alex G. Long, *Conversation and Self-Sufficiency in Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 42–45. On Callicles as a speaker in relation to Socrates' reference to ἐπιστήμη, εὔνοια, and παρρησία see Marina McCoy, *Plato on the Rhetoric of Philosophers and Sophists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 103–106.

7 For Euripides' *Antiope* as a model for the *Gorgias* as Plato's good-oriented tragedy see Mauro Tulli, "Il Gorgia e la lira di Anfione," in *Gorgias – Menon: Selected Papers from the Seventh Symposium Platonicum*, eds. Michael Erler and Luc Brisson (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2007); Fritz-Gregor Herrmann, "Poetry in Plato's Gorgias," in *Plato and the Poets*, eds. Pierre Destrée and Fritz-Gregor Herrmann (Leiden: Brill, 2011), as well as Marie-Pierre Noël in this volume.

8 On Callicles being unable to define "the better" see Jyl Gentzler, "The Sophistic Cross-Examination of Callicles in the Gorgias," *Ancient Philosophy* 15,1 (1995), and Stauffer, *Unity*, 99 and n. 17.

plan to do without relenting "due to softness of the soul" (*dia malakian tes psuches*); it is also, as Callicles points out, fitting for these men to rule cities and it is "just" (*to dikaion*) for the rulers to "have more" (*pleon echein*) than the ruled.

The right of Callicles' superior men to a greater share gains Socrates' full attention. On account of this supposed right to have more, Socrates raises the question of whether a ruler should rule himself or only others (491d4–e1).[9] Callicles rejects the idea that his "intelligent" (*phronimos*) and "courageous" (*andreios*) ruler also ought to be "temperate" (*sophron*), "master of himself" (*enkrates*)[10] and able to rule the desires within him (ἐπιθυμιῶν ἄρχων τῶν ἐν ἑαυτῷ), for – he claims – there is no happiness in being a slave to anyone, not even to oneself (491e2–6).[11] In contrast to the need for self-control envisaged by Socrates, the correct way of life according to nature consists, for Callicles, not in restraining desires, but in letting them grow as large as possible and being able to "serve" (*huperetein*) them by means of "courage" (*andreia*) and "intelligence" (*phronesis*), satisfying whatever particular desire we may have (491e5–492a3): this way of life, argues Callicles, is not in the power of the many, whose praise of "temperance" (*sophrosune*) and "justice" (*dikaiosune*) is a sign of their "lack of manliness" (*anandria*) when it comes to fulfilling their own desires (492a3–b1). Callicles thus provides a striking definition of both "excellence and happiness" (*arete te kai eudaimonia*), as corresponding to "luxury" (*truphe*), "intemperance" (*akolasia*), and "freedom" (*eleutheria*) (492c3–8). Just as was the case with his earlier claim, according to which "law" (*nomos*) is inferior to "nature" (*phusis*), Callicles' point shows a subversive intent with regard to the traditional conception of virtue: in dismissing justice and temperance

9 Charles H. Kahn, "Drama and Dialectic in Plato's Gorgias," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 1 (1983): 102, highlights a sudden shift in topic, from Callicles' stance on natural justice to the question of politicians' self-mastery. Yet the question raised here by Socrates is consistent with his interest in the finest of all possible inquiries concerning what a man ought to be like.

10 For the relationship between *sophrosune* and *enkrateia* see Louis-André Dorion, "Enkrateia and the Partition of the Soul in the *Gorgias*," in *Plato and the Divided Self*, eds. Rachel Barney, Tad Brennan, and Charles Brittain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 38–52.

11 For self-control in relation to Socratic intellectualism in the *Gorgias* see John M. Cooper, "The Gorgias and Irwin's Socrates," *The Review of Metaphysics* 35,3 (1982); John M. Cooper, "Socrates and Plato in Plato's Gorgias," in *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory*, ed. John M. Cooper (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); and Christopher Rowe, "The Moral Psychology of the Gorgias," in *Gorgias – Menon: Selected papers from the Seventh Symposium Platonicum*, eds. Michael Erler and Luc Brisson (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2007).

as virtues suitable for inferior men, Callicles equates human excellence with intemperance, which provides happiness, and which is to be reached by means of intelligence and courage acting at the service of desires. Recapping Callicles' stance on excellence as intemperance and the satisfaction of desires, Socrates interprets "excellence" (*arete*) as referring to the correct functioning of a human being, which allows him to become "who he ought to be" (*hoion dei einai*, 492d5–e2). Socrates' emphasis on the connection of excellence to being who one ought to be is crucial for understanding the perspective from which Socrates goes on to frame his own idea of excellence in contrast to that of his interlocutor: Callicles' understanding of excellence as "intemperance" (*akolasia*) of desires in a foolish individual is contrasted with Socrates' understanding of excellence as corresponding to the "order" (*kosmos*) which come to be present in a rational individual.

3 "What a Man Ought to Be Like": The Craft Analogy Argument

At the pinnacle of Socrates' refutation of Callicles – with his interlocutor refusing to play the role of respondent any longer – Socrates is forced to complete the discussion on his own, thus taking on the role of both questioner and respondent (505c1–d9). In the form of a *recapitulatio*,[12] he first briefly summarizes the findings of the discussion about the pleasant and the good, followed by the outcome of the application of the craft analogy to the case of the politician-orator in relation to the soul of the citizens as subject of his craft,[13] upon which the ensuing portrayal of the completely good man depends (506c5–507c7).

Contrary to Callicles' initial admission (494e9–495a6) and formal declaration (495d2–5), "the pleasant" (*to hedu*) is not the same as "the good" (*to agathon*), since the pleasant is what makes people experience pleasure, while the good is that by virtue of which individuals are "good" (*agathoi*) (506c6–d2). Socrates associates the state of being good, in the case of both individuals and all other things, with some "excellence" which comes to be present by virtue of

12 For this section interpreted as a *recapitulatio* see Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik: Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft* (München: M. Hueber, 1960), 434–437, 442, 671.

13 Terence Irwin sees politicians and citizens here to be related as shepherd and sheep or carpenter and wood, a relationship which, in his view, makes it "no longer obvious why a virtuous man with moral knowledge should teach the citizens the same knowledge". T. Irwin, *Plato*: Gorgias, *Translated with Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 214. On the craft analogy in relation to the craft of ruling see Richard Parry, *Plato's Craft of Justice* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 11–73.

"structure" (*taxis*), "correctness" (*orthotes*), and the "craft" (*techne*) assigned to each of them (506d2–8). Socrates defines his understanding of excellence in terms of the concept of "order" (*kosmos*): it is the presence of a certain order, namely the proper order of each thing, that renders each of the things that are good good (506e2–4).[14] Callicles' threefold definition of excellence and happiness as luxury, intemperance and freedom is amended here by Socrates' threefold definition of excellence as "structure" (*taxis*), "correctness" (*orthotes*) and "craft" (*techne*)– that is the "order" (*kosmos*) that comes to be present in an individual's soul when it is "good". Accordingly, a soul possessing its own proper order is better than one that is "disordered" (*akosmetos*): it follows that a soul which has order is "orderly" (*kosmia*), and an orderly soul is "temperate" (*sophron*), with the result that the soul that is good is the moderate one (506e4–507a3).

Consistent with this line of reasoning, Socrates counters Callicles' model of superior individuals with his portrayal of the man who is "completely" (*teleos*) "good" (*agathos*) based on temperance as the underlying virtue from which all the others follow: the temperate individual must be "just" (*dikaios*) and "pious" (*hosios*), for he would act appropriately regarding both men and gods, and also "courageous" (*andreios*), in that he would pursue or flee what it is appropriate to pursue or flee, whether actions, people or pleasures and pains (507a5–b8). Socrates then infers that it is the temperate individual who will be happy, since the good individual does whatever he does "well and rightly" (*eu te kai kalos*), and whoever does well is "blessed and happy" (*makarios te kai eudaimon*), whereas the "base" (*poneros*) individual who does badly, is "wretched" (*athlios*). Socrates identifies the latter with the intemperate man praised by Callicles, as representing the opposite of the individual who is temperate (507b8–c7).

The absence of *phronesis* in Socrates' account of virtues,[15] together with the emphasis on *kosmos* and *sophrosune*, led earlier scholarship to see evidence here of Plato distancing himself from the Socratic notion that virtue

14 On which see the contribution by Frisbee Sheffield in this volume.

15 The absence of *phronesis* is foreshadowed by Socrates' asymmetrical use of adjectives to describe the soul (507a5–7): the adjectives ἄφρων and ἀκόλαστος used to describe the ψυχὴ κακή are not mirrored in the description of the ψυχὴ ἀγαθή, where we only find σώφρων, which should be understood as corresponding both to ἀκόλαστος and to the antonym of ἄφρων, that is φρόνιμος. The same opposition should be also identified in the water carriers myth, where κόσμιοι is opposed to both ἀνόητοι and ἀκόλαστοι (493a5–d3); see David Blank, "The Fate of the Ignorant in Plato's 'Gorgias'," *Hermes* 119,1 (1991). With regard to these asymmetric oppositions, Cooper, "Socrates and Plato," 68, n. 59, notes that "throughout Socrates' discussion of the two lives wisdom (*phronesis*) is plainly implied as the origin of *sophrosune* in any soul."

is knowledge, and hinting at a new ethics in which "ἐπιστήμη [knowledge] is dethroned from the exclusive supremacy which Socrates assigned to her", as Thompson puts it.[16] The supposedly un-Socratic point of view found in this passage has never ceased to capture the attention of interpreters. More recently, Sedley has pointed out that Socrates' understanding of virtue in the *Gorgias* constitutes a brand-new account of the unity of virtue: "Not only does this schema dethrone wisdom from the role it enjoys in the *Protagoras*, as the dominant virtue in the genealogy", but also "it actually excludes wisdom from the genealogy of virtue altogether" – a reading which, he claims, implies a "surprisingly non-intellectualistic unification of virtue".[17] Does the portrayal of the completely good man in Socrates' *recapitulatio* testify to the Platonic Socrates' retreat from the claim that virtue is knowledge?[18] In order to answer this question, one must take into consideration the unusual dialogical context in which Socrates finds himself, due to the withdrawal of the last speaker, recapitulating the findings of the previous conversation alone, providing it with a conclusion (505c5–d9).[19] Both the understanding of excellence as *kosmos* and the absence of *phronesis* among the virtues of the completely good man depend on the second and final argument that Socrates directs against Callicles' view of excellence as intemperance:[20] the application of the craft analogy to the case of the politician-orator in relation to the souls of the citizens. I shall maintain that Socrates' portrayal of the "temperate man" (*sophron aner*) is to be interpreted as referring only to the good citizen, understood as the product of the good politician's craft, and thus he displays only those virtues which the craft of ruling is supposed to produce. From this point of view, a close examination of the wider context in which the model of the virtuous individual based on *sophrosune* is presented will show that Socrates' understanding of excellence as *kosmos* is consistent with the standard Socratic view that virtue is knowledge.[21]

16 Thompson, *Gorgias*, IX.
17 Sedley, "Unity," 72–77.
18 Sedley, "Unity," 76, speaks of a "temporary abandonment of intellectualist account of virtue", opposed to the intellectualistic model of virtue sketched in the *Protagoras* and the *Phaedo*.
19 On Socrates' dogmatic tone after Callicles' withdrawal and its connection to the unusual context see Christopher Gill, "Form and Outcome of Argument in Plato's Gorgias," in *Gorgias – Menon: Selected Papers from the Seventh Symposium Platonicum*, eds. Michael Erler and Luc Brisson (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2007), 62–65.
20 The first argument, as Cooper correctly notes, is the jars analogy section. "Irwin's Socrates," 584.
21 For a fully intellectualistic reading of the reference to psychic order see Rowe, "Psychology," 90–101.

From the *recapitulatio*, we know that Socrates summarises a particular portion of his longer exchange with Callicles, stretching from the problem of the identification of the pleasant with the good (495a2–c2) to the craft analogy argument (503d5–505c9). Socrates sums up in a few lines the results of the broad *excursus* meant to disprove the assimilation of the pleasant to the good, but lingers longer over the section on the craft analogy that he appeals to in order to define the good politician practising the noble kind of rhetoric. Here, after introducing the idea of "true excellence" (*arete alethes*), provided by a "craft" (*techne*), which – distinguishing between beneficial and harmful pleasures (as was previously agreed at 499c6–500a6) – only satisfies those pleasures which make men better (503c4–d3), Socrates equates deliberative rhetoric with other crafts in general. The "good politician-orator speaking with a view to the best" (ὁ ἀγαθὸς ἀνὴρ καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιστον λέγων) is compared to the whole range of other "craftsmen" (*demiurgoi*): painters, builders, gymnastic trainers and doctors seek to give the "object" (*pragma*) of their "work" (*ergon*) a suitable "structure" (*taxis*) and "order" (*kosmos*) in order to make it "useful" (*chreston*), thus enabling it to function properly (503d4–504b6). On this analogy, Socrates considers human beings as the specific object of three categories of craftsmen: gymnastic-trainers and doctors, for the body, and politicians, for the soul, all of them providing a fitting "structure" and "order" for the body and the soul respectively (504b7–d3). Socrates explains that the *taxeis* and *kosmeseis* of a properly functioning soul are the "lawful" (*nomimon*)[22] and "law" (*nomos*) – which correspond to justice and temperance – through which people become "law-abiding" (*nomimoi*) and "orderly" (*kosmioi*) (504d1–3). Hence, the task of a politician-orator, provided that he is "good and proficient in his craft" (*technikos te kai agathos*), is to produce justice and temperance in the citizens' souls and to remove injustice and intemperance (504d5–e4). Following this line of reasoning, Socrates concludes, initially with Callicles' assent, that as long as a soul is "in a bad condition" (*ponera*), that is to say "senseless" (*anoetos*), intemperate, unjust, and impious, the good politician-orator should "keep it away" (*eirgein*) from what it desires, just as doctors do not allow people to satisfy their bodily desires when their body is sick (505b1–8). But no sooner has Socrates concluded this argument with the equation between "keeping away from" (*eirgein*) and "correcting" (*kolazesthai*) – which implies that "correction" (*to kolazesthai*) is better for the soul than intemperance – than Callicles rudely withdraws his assent and leaves the conversation (505b9–c4). Socrates has, in fact, just *dethroned* the intemperance Callicles champions from its role in

22 For a similar use of the term see Empedocles B 135 D-K (= 121 Wright), and Sophocles, *Antigone* 450–455.

producing excellence, and turned it into the worst possible treatment for the soul. There is no further possibility of joint enquiry on this point between the two, and Socrates will bring the conversation to an end on his own.

Now, by juxtaposing the craft analogy section with the corresponding summary in the *recapitulatio*, we can spot a significant difference in Socrates' focus. In the discussion with Callicles, the focus is on the "craftsman" (*demiourgos*) at the centre of the analogy, namely the good politician-orator speaking with a view to the best and committed to making the citizens as good as possible (503d7). Socrates outlines his profile in intellectualistic terms: the politician-orator is said to be "good and proficient in his craft" (504d5–6); he masters and practices a craft bearing on "true excellence" (*arete alethes*) (503c4–d3); this craft does not consist in satisfying our own and others' desires (503c5–6) – which is what the "practices" (*paraskeuai*) which only have pleasure as their goal do, lacking any knowledge of what is better and what is worse,[23] and this is because they are mere knacks, like cookery (500a7–b5), but rather it consists in satisfying only those desires whose satisfaction makes a person better (503c7–d1) – which is what the practices which "recognise what is good and what is bad" do (αἱ δὲ γιγνώσκουσαι ὅτι τε ἀγαθὸν καὶ ὅτι κακόν), and these are crafts concerned with the good, like medicine (500a7–b5).[24] By contrast, Socrates' focus in the *recapitulatio* is not on the craftsman in the analogy – the good politician-orator who knows what true excellence in his craft is, but on the "object" of his "work": the soul he made "orderly" (*kosmia*), and thus "good" (*agathe*), through the exercise of the fine kind of rhetoric grounded in knowledge of what is good and bad for the soul. On account of this shift in focus, the portrayal of the completely good man should be taken to refer only to the good citizen ruled by a good politician, who, according to the concept of orderliness borrowed from the craft analogy, fosters in the soul what corresponds to its proper structure and order, that is justice and temperance and all of the other *ethical* virtues. It is from the point of view of those who are ruled, as subjects of the healing political craft of the soul, that Socrates has sketched the profile of the man who is completely good in the *recapitulatio*: it is from the perspective of the subject of the craft of ruling that the absence of any reference to *phronesis* in the account of the temperate man should be interpreted,[25] since

23 αἱ μὲν μέχρι ἡδονῆς, αὐτὸ τοῦτο μόνον παρασκευάζουσαι, ἀγνοοῦσαι δὲ τὸ βέλτιον καὶ τὸ χεῖρον (*Grg*. 500b2–3).

24 Thomas Brickhouse and Nicolas Smith, *Socratic Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 191–192, interpret this τέχνη as a 'craft of measurement'.

25 With respect to the absence of *phronesis* from the list of virtues, Charles H. Kahn interprets virtue as the *telos* of the "moral-political *technē*", that is "the good condition of the souls of those on whom the art is practiced": on this assumption he concludes that "it

phronesis, unlike the other virtues, cannot be produced in the soul, but only oriented towards the good, as Socrates explains in a passage from *Republic* VII, which I shall now discuss.

4 The Perils of *phronesis*: The Case of Evil, but Skilled Individuals in the *Republic*

In order to shed light on the absence of *phronesis* in the profile of the virtuous individual of the *Gorgias,* it will be useful to consider Socrates' account of the virtues of the soul in *Republic* VII. According to his own interpretation of the allegory of the cave as referring to the soul's necessary ascent to the good (*Resp*. VII 517a8–c4), Socrates distinguishes between the incorrect model of *paideia*, corresponding to the Sophists' implanting of knowledge into souls which lack it, and the true *paideia*, understood as the craft of "turning" (*periagoge*) the faculty with which one learns towards the good (VII 518b7–d7). Socrates identifies this faculty with the virtue of the soul entrusted to reasoning, and gives an account of virtues in which *phronesis* has a different status with respect to the others (VII 518d9–519a5).[26] Unlike the other so-called virtues of the soul acquired by habit and practice,[27] "the virtue of reasoning" (*he de tou phronesai*) happens to be made up above all of something more divine, which never loses its inborn "faculty" (*dunamis*) and whether it is useful and beneficial or useless and harmful depends on the way in which it is turned (VII 518d9–519a1). Socrates distinguishes the virtue of reasoning from all of the other virtues on

would obscure the teleological structure of this art if virtue, its product, was identified with knowledge or *technē*, the art itself". *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 133.

26 On this section see Kenneth Dorter, *The Transformation of Plato's Republic* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 206–208.

27 James Adam notes that "Plato does not mean to deny that they are virtues, but they do not belong to soul essentially and from the first," for Plato "is merely contrasting these and other virtues or excellencies with *νόησις*." *The Republic of Plato*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902), 99. On the account of *phronesis* in this passage in relation to Plato's tripartite psychology see Rachana Kamtekar, "The *Powers* of Plato's Tripartite Psychology," in *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 24 (2009): 131–133; David Sedley, "Socratic Intellectualism in the Republic's Central Digression," in *The Platonic Art of Philosophy*, eds. George Boys-Stones, Dimitri El Murr, and Christopher Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 80–89; and Ivana Costa, "Platonic Souls in the Cave: Are They Only Rational?" in *Soul and Mind in Greek Thought: Psychological Issues in Plato and Aristotle,* eds. Marcelo D. Boeri, Yasuhira Y. Kanayama, and Jorge Mittelmann (Cham: Springer, 2018), 142–150.

account of the fact that *phronesis* is not produced in the soul through education, since it is already innately present in the soul, but must be oriented by education towards the good. By contrast, the other virtues of the soul, namely justice, temperance, and the like, are not innate but "produced afterwards" (*husteron empoieisthai*), that is, acquired later through the adherence to a way of life meant to produce and foster them (VII 518d9–11). Socrates' distinction between a single innate virtue oriented towards the good and all of the others, which are not innate but must be bred, sheds light on Socrates' application of the craft analogy in the *Gorgias* to the politician-orator, whose "speeches" (*logoi*) and "actions" (*praxeis*) seek to engender in citizens' souls those virtues which can be acquired through correct customs and practices (*Grg*. 504d5–e4). The focus on the object of the craftsman's work in Socrates' summary of the craft analogy argument is consistent with his distinction between produced and innate virtues in *Republic* VII: equating the politician-orator's work with that of any other artisan implies a distinction between the politician (as craftsman) who shapes the citizens' souls, and the citizens' souls (as the craftsman's object), which are shaped by the politician through the production of the virtues of temperance and justice in them. From the perspective both of Socrates' stance on the virtues in *Republic* VII and of the craft analogy argument in the *Gorgias*, it is no surprise that *phronesis* is not included among the virtues Socrates ascribes to the virtuous individual, for, insofar as it is innate, *phronesis* cannot be produced either by the craft of ruling nor by philosophical *paideia*, but only oriented toward the good by the latter.

Socrates' understanding of *phronesis* as the innate virtue of reasoning – whose neutral "faculty" (*dunamis*) can be either beneficial or harmful, depending on its orientation – sheds light on his use of the term *phronimoteroi*, "more intelligent", to identify Callicles' superior men. At some point during the inquiry into what Callicles claims to be the just by nature (488b2–490a8), Socrates figures out that the excellent men Callicles has in mind – namely, those who are allowed to seize inferior men's belongings, as well as who are entrusted to rule over them and to have more than them (488b2–6) – could be "the more intelligent" (489e6–490a8). The term *phronimoteroi* proposed by Socrates necessarily takes on a negative connotation, since it is meant to sum up Callicles' stance on justice and human excellence, through which *phronesis* is associated with expropriation, tyrannical power, and the right to a "greater share" (*pleon echein*). The same negative connotation is attributed to the virtue of reasoning in the passage from *Republic* VII under consideration (519a1–5): Socrates explains the negative potential of *phronesis* by pointing to the case of "evil, but skilled individuals" (*poneroi-sophoi*), whose "petty, inferior soul" (*psucharion*) nonetheless possess sharp, keen vision; for such a soul's sense of

sight (*opsis*), namely *phronesis*, is in no way inferior, although is compelled to "serve evil" (*kakiai huperetein*), such that the more sharply it sees, the more evils it accomplishes. It is no surprise therefore that Plato has Callicles employ the same verb *huperetein* in his definition of the fine and just by nature: the man who intends to live rightly should allow his own desires to become as great as possible, and then he should "be able to place his intelligence and courage at the service" (ἱκανὸν εἶναι ὑπηρετεῖν δι' ἀνδρείαν καὶ φρόνησιν) of those desires (*Grg*. 491c5–492a3).

Furthermore, Socrates not only presents the same perspective on *phronesis*' negative sense and subservience to evil ends in both dialogues, but his treatment of *phronesis* is also framed by the same hedonistic background, at least if we take into account the fact that, in the passage of *Republic* VII immediately following the account of the virtues, Socrates ascribes the corruption of the soul to pleasure (519a7–b5). Referring to the petty soul of the evil, but skilled individuals, burdened with "leaden weights" (*molubdides*) – that is, the heavy psychic deformities resulting from a life devoted to the world of Becoming – Socrates points to the adverse effects of pleasures, in the sense that they are the cause of those weights which bend the vision of the soul downwards, thus forcing *phronesis* to serve evil. Socrates' claims about the role of pleasures in damaging the soul are set forth within the framework of the relationship of the soul's innate virtue to correct education: this encompasses both an early stage,[28] which involves "getting rid of psychic weight" (*molubdidas … hon … apallagen*), resulting from pleasure-oriented ways of life,[29] and a later stage, which involves orienting *phronesis* towards the things that are true[30] – as opposed to those related to Becoming. These two stages in Socrates' understanding of education involve the previous distinction between the *ethical* virtues – that is those acquired by habit and practices aimed at getting rid of the soul's deformities – and the *intellectual* virtue of *phronesis*, which is not acquired, but which is oriented towards the good. The craft analogy argument in the *Gorgias* closely recalls Socrates' stance in *Republic* VII on ethical virtues as being produced later in the soul and the paideutic commitment to eliminating evils, at least, if one considers that in sketching the figure of the good politician-orator at 504d5–4 Socrates describes his task in similar terms, namely as consisting of bringing justice and moderation into existence (*gignetai*;

28 τοῦτο μέντοι, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, τὸ τῆς τοιαύτης φύσεως εἰ ἐκ παιδὸς εὐθὺς κοπτόμενον περιεκόπη τὰς τῆς γενέσεως συγγενεῖς ὥσπερ μολυβδίδας (*Resp*. VII 519a7–b1)

29 αἳ δὴ ἐδωδαῖς τε καὶ τοιούτων ἡδοναῖς τε καὶ λιχνείαις προσφυεῖς γιγνόμεναι περικάτω στρέφουσι τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ὄψιν (*Resp*. VII 519b1–3)

30 τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ὄψιν […] εἰ […] περιεστρέφετο εἰς τὰ ἀληθῆ (*Resp*. VII 519b3–4)

eggignetai) in citizens' souls and "getting rid" (*apallattetai*) of injustice and intemperance.

Socrates' views on *paideia* in *Republic* VII are mainly concerned with the supplementary education envisioned for selected guardians – in addition to the early education in gymnastics and music (521d13–522b4) described in Book II and III, which aimed to provide them with ethical virtues. This longer educational path (*makrotera periodos*, *Resp*. VI 504b–d9) is intended to select and train the future philosopher-kings of the city which is "wise" and "sound in judgment" (*sophe kai euboulos*, *Resp*. IV 428b12–13), whose philosophical *paideia* will enable them to attain the *megiston mathema* (*Resp*. VII 519c4–d2) by means of that *periagoge* of the soul which corresponds to true philosophy (521c1–8). It is worth noting that, in the *Gorgias,* Socrates is not talking about a *Kallipolis* ruled by philosophers, but rather about the real *polis* of Athens, a sick, swollen city, suffering from festering sores caused by generations of politicians who set up feasts for the Athenians and indulged all of their desires, with no moderation and justice (518e1–519b2). It is the sick city of Athens that Plato portrays through the character Callicles, who embodies and champions those "evil and skilled" (*poneroi-sophoi*) individuals whose divine, innate virtue of *phronesis* is enslaved to limitless desires, and thus bound to serve evil ends. It is in opposition to Callicles' perilous paradigm of intelligent and brave leaders who lack in justice and moderation that Plato has Socrates resort to the craft analogy: its application to the case of the politician-orator in relation to the soul of the citizens draws our attention back to the ethical virtues rejected by Callicles, whilst avoiding conflict with a knowledge-based account of virtue, as evidenced not only by Socrates' intellectualistic portrayal of the politician-orator, but also by a cognitive understanding of the concept of *kosmos* of the soul as relating to knowledge of geometrical equality – as emerges from Socrates' remarks on his own *recapitulatio*, which I shall now discuss.

5 The Knowledge of Geometric Equality and the Relation of the Body with the Soul

Outside the narrow boundaries of the craft analogy argument, in which the wide spectrum of meanings of the term *kosmos* is narrowed down to "order", intended as the correct arrangement of parts, both as a result of the comparison itself with houses, boats and bodies (*Grg*. 504a8–b3), and under the influence of its being paired with the term "structure" (*taxis*), Socrates sheds light on his understanding of *kosmos* as relating to the knowledge of geometric equality. In his closing remarks immediately following the depiction of the

virtuous individual (507c8–508a8), Socrates interprets the meaning of *kosmos*, choosing here the cognate abstract noun "orderliness" (*kosmiotes*), not as an "arrangement of" but rather a "proportion among" distinct elements. This shift from *kosmos* to *kosmiotes* may clarify the relationship of *sophrosune*, as the leading virtue of the soul, with the concept of *kosmos*, which is left unexplained in the description of the virtuous individual: my contention is that Socrates' reference to geometric equality explains the orderliness of the soul not as its own internal arrangement of parts,[31] but as the outcome of the understanding of the correct proportion in the dualism between body and soul.

Commenting on the results of his debate with Callicles, Socrates maintains that a life devoted to satisfying limitless, overgrown desires not only impedes individual happiness, in that it is an "evil without end" (*anenuton kakon*), but is also the greatest obstacle to the "communion" (*koinonia*), and therefore "friendship" (*philia*), upon which individual happiness depends (507c–e6).[32] In order to support his claims about communion and friendship among citizens, Socrates resorts to the authority of "the wise" (*hoi sophoi*):[33] the wise

31 Louis-André Dorion claims that "although in the *Gorgias* Plato never explicitly asserts a bipartition of the soul into reason and desire, one can conclude nonetheless (in the light of 491d and 493a–b) that Plato envisages a bipartition of this sort". Dorion, "Enkrateia," 41. See also Irwin, *Ethics*, 109 and 114. David Sedley, maintains, on the basis of 493a1–b3 and 496e6–8, that, in the *Gorgias*, Socrates introduces "an importantly new idea, that of psychic complexity: the soul is a complex entity which includes a distinct part containing potentially unruly desires". Sedley, "Unity," 72–73. Daniel Lopes believes that "the discussion of temperance and intemperance between Socrates and Callicles contains features that evoke the treatment of the 'part' of the soul in books IV, VIII and IX of the *Republic*". D. Lopes, "Moral Psychology in Plato's Gorgias," *Journal of Ancient Philosophy* 11,1 (2017): 30. See also George Klosko, "Persuasion and Moral Reform in Plato and Aristotle," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* vol. 47, no. 184,1 (1993): 34, and Raphael Woolf, "Callicles and Socrates: Psychic (Dis)harmony in the *Gorgias*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 18 (2000), 30–31. Dodds contends, against Alfred Taylor, *Plato, the Man and his Work* (New York: L. MacVeagh, Dial Press, 1929), 120 n. 1, that the wise man's formulation reported by Socrates τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς τοῦτο ἐν ᾧ ἐπιθυμίαι εἰσὶ (493a3–4) implies no partition of the soul: "all that need be assumed is the popular distinction between reason and impulse […] The tripartition first appears in the *Republic*, and the manner of its introduction at IV 435b–c strongly suggests that Plato devises it as a counterpart of the three classes in society." Dodds, *Gorgias*, 300. See also Yuji Kurihara, "Plato's Conception of Unhappiness in the Gorgias," *Skepsis* 13–14 (2002): 115.

32 For the role of friendship in Socrates' conversation with Callicles see Woolf, "Psychic (Dis) harmony," 9–17, and Tushar Irani, *Plato on the Value of Philosophy: The Art of Argument in the Gorgias and Phaedrus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 82–87.

33 On the Pythagorean milieu of the wise men see the discussion in Philip Sidney Horky, "When did Kosmos become the Kosmos?" in *Cosmos in the Ancient World*, ed. P. S. Horky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). The anonymity of the reference could

men say that communion and friendship, orderliness, temperance, and justice keep together heaven and earth, as well as gods and men, as evidenced by what the wise men name the universe, that is, not "disorder" or "intemperance", but "cosmos" (507e6–508a4). Socrates remarks that Callicles has clearly paid no attention to what the wise men say and, even though he is also supposed to be a wise man in these matters, he has nevertheless "failed to notice" (*lelethen se*) that "geometric equality" (*he isotes he geometrike*)[34] has great power among gods and men; this failure is the result of a lack of knowledge: it is Callicles' neglect of geometry (*geometrias gar ameleis*) that has led him to champion the pursuit of a disproportionate share of things (*pleonexia*) (508a4–7).[35] Callicles fails to notice that geometry – of which he is heedless – provides the notion of common ratio pointing to the correct proportion between heaven and earth, gods and men, and even men among themselves. In this light, both Callicles' claim to the natural right of superior men to a greater share and his praise of intemperance prove to be signs of a cognitive failure which reveals his ignorance of geometric equality as the universal principle enabling the understanding of the correct proportion between individuals and between the body and the soul respectively.

It is worth noting that the references to the evil without end of satisfying limitless desires, the misinterpretation of intemperance as the governing principle, the cognitive failure involved in championing a greater share, together with Socrates' argument based on the authority of the wise men, take the reader back to Socrates' first counter-attack to Callicles' hedonism, which starts with the limpid concision of the maxim "blessed are those who need nothing" (οἱ μηδενὸς δεόμενοι εὐδαίμονες) and, through Euripides' verses "Who knows if being alive is really being dead, and being dead alive" (τίς δ' οἶδεν εἰ τὸ ζῆν μέν ἐστι κατθανεῖν, τὸ κατθανεῖν δὲ ζῆν, fr. 638 Kannicht = fr. 8 Jouan–Van Looy – from

be intentional: Plato may have merged together in a coherent new articulation heterogeneous elements of Presocratic origin, in order to point to the relation of cosmology and geometry to ethics – hence the difficulty in identifying a certain reference: see Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*. Transl. Edwin L. Minar, Jr. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 78–79.

34 This is the geometrical progression as opposed to both numerical equality and arithmetical progression: see Dodds, *Gorgias*, 399–40; Gregory Vlastos, *Platonic Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 195, n. 119; and Irwin, *Gorgias*, 226.

35 Burkert notes that Socrates' reference to geometric proportion is not equivalent to the equality that distributes more to the greater and less to the lesser, to which the Athenian Stranger refers in the *Laws* (VI 757b7–c6), which "would be scarcely appropriate to refute the *pleonexia* of Callicles": in his opinion, the reference to geometrical equality "should be understood in a more general sense, as ἡ τοῦ ἴσου ἀναλογία in Archytas A23a – the power of mathematics that governs the world". *Pythagoreanism*, 78, n. 156.

the *Polyidus*),[36] culminates in the leaky jars accounts (492e3–494a5). The whole section hinges on the authority of the claim of an anonymous wise man that we are now dead and that the "body" (*soma*) is for us a "grave" (*sema*), a vivid image indicating the disproportionate relationship between body and soul that Callicles, like the "foolish and uninitiated" (*anoetoi-amuetoi*) in the water carriers account (493a7),[37] has failed to notice, due to his ignorance of the correct proportion in the *koinonia* of body and soul. Socrates' point in his first reply is based on arguments he heard, remembers and firmly believes. He acknowledges in them a truth which has persuaded him and which could now compel Callicles to revise his dangerous positions, persuading him that the "intemperate life" (*akolastos bios*), in which limitless desires affect and jeopardise the correct equilibrium among body and soul is wretched (494a2–5). Since Callicles refuses to be persuaded by these arguments, Socrates will drop his strategy of argumentation based on external sources of wisdom in order to counter Callicles' stance with his question-and-answer method. This approach leads to the reference to geometric equality, which sums up Socrates' initial set of arguments against Callicles' hedonism. Just as Callicles' stance on the right to a greater share reveals his ignorance of the geometric equality between men – which corresponds to the cognitive domain of justice – so too his praise of intemperance reveals his ignorance of the geometric equality between the body and the soul – which is the cognitive domain of temperance. This ignorance of the universal governing principle explains Callicles' "disbelief" (*apistia*, 493c3)[38] with respect to Socrates' arguments and also accounts for his rejection of justice and temperance, upon which the enslavement of *phronesis* to bodily desires depends. Socrates references Callicles' overturning of the correct soul-body hierarchy by means of the wise man's pun *soma-sema*, pointing to the disproportion in the communion of body and soul, which Callicles fails to notice, due to his own lack of knowledge.

36 See Laura Carrara, *L'indovino Poliido. Eschilo, Le cretesi, Sofocle, Manteis, Euripide, Poliido* (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2014), 326–33.

37 On the relation of ἀκολασία with ignorance, and of ignorance with misery according to the wise man's interpretation of the water carriers' myth see Blank, "Fate," 22–36.

38 According to Olympiodorus' understanding of the term: ἀπιστίαν μὲν τῷ μηδὲ ὅλως παραδέχεσθαι, λήθην δὲ τῷ παραδέχεσθαι μὲν ἐπιλανθάνεσθαι δέ (*In Plat. Gorg.* 30,6 = p. 157, 18–20 Westerink). See Harold Tarrant, "Literal and Deeper Meanings in Platonic Myths," in *Plato and Myth: Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myths*, eds. Catherine Collobert, Pierre Destrée, and Francisco J. Gonzales (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 55–56. For ἀπιστία as "unreliability" see Irwin, *Gorgias*, 492; Dodds, *Gorgias*, 303; and Cooper, "Socrates and Plato," 60–61.

It is worth noting that Socrates' references to the happiness of a desireless life, the equation between being alive and being dead, and the simile of the grave – which point to the detrimental effects of the body on the rational life of the soul and are left undeveloped in the *Gorgias*, due to Callicles' refusal to even consider Socrates' arguments against his pleasure-oriented life – are fully developed, as we shall see in the next section, in the so-called second apology of the *Phaedo*, where Socrates' perspective on body-soul dualism sheds light on geometrical equality as a metaphor pointing to the knowledge of the "correct proportion" (*kosmiotes*) between the body and the soul.

6 Different Accounts for Different Addressees: the *Phaedo*

Socrates' perspective on Callicles' cognitive failure in the *Gorgias* should be considered in the light of the former's soul-oriented understanding of *phronesis* in the *Phaedo*. Here Socrates is called to account for his way of life, this time not in the political dimension of the *polis*, as in the *Gorgias* and the *Apology*, but within the circle of his companions. The motif of the body as a fatal obstacle to the cognitive life of the soul and its relationship to an intellectualistic conception of virtue (to which the application of geometrical proportion to ethical issues refers) is a topic that Socrates can only hint at in the *Gorgias*, due to his interlocutor's reluctance to engage in philosophical dialogue. This idea is fully developed in the *Phaedo* instead, where, by contrast, it is the key argument upon which Socrates bases his defence of the philosophical life. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates fully develops the content of truth that he gleans from the simile of the "grave" (*sema*), in support of both the philosopher's practice of death as a purification from the body and of his own stance on true virtue. The simile of the body as a grave in the *Gorgias* closely recalls Socrates' viewpoint on the relationship between the body and the soul in the *Phaedo*, where the body is said to be an obstacle (*empodios koinonos*, lit. "a companion [standing] in the way") for the soul in acquiring *phronesis* (65a10). This is because it perturbs the soul and does not allow it to acquire truth and wisdom, whenever it is associated with it (*Phd.* 66a5–6). This perspective is confirmed by the discussion among the true philosophers, in which the body is said to be an "evil" (*kakon*) which prevents them from acquiring "the truth" (*to alethes*): in fact, the needs, affections and desires of the body prevent them from thinking (*phronein*) – and thus prevent them from doing philosophy (*Phd.* 66b1–d3).[39] On the basis

39 For Socrates' treatment of desires in the *Phaedo* as only related to the body see George Boys-Stones, "Phaedo of Elis and Plato on the Soul," *Phronesis* 49,1 (2004): 4–7.

of a sharp distinction between a body-oriented and a soul-oriented way of life, Socrates distinguishes two opposite kinds of individuals, the “lover of wisdom” (*philosophos*) and the “body-lover” (*philosomatos*) – who could also be a “money-lover” (*philochrematos*) or “honour-lover” (*philotimos*) or both (*Phd.* 68b8–c3). Depending on these, in turn, is the distinction between true virtues, defined by their value being determined by wisdom,[40] and virtues wrongly considered as such based on the hedonistic trading of one bodily affection for another, like currencies (69a6–b8).[41] Socrates' intellectualistic account of virtues reaches its climax in the definition of true virtue as “a kind of purification” (*katharsis tis*) – that is, the purification of *dianoia* in a soul freed from the bonds of the body (*Phd.* 67b7–d2) – and of the practice of true virtues as “a kind of rite of purification” (*katharmos tis*) (*Phd.* 69b8–c3), which points to the philosopher's exercise of reason as a purification from the body's “folly” (*aphrosune*) (*Phd.* 67a2–b4).[42] Without the purificatory rite of philosophical life, the fate of individuals in afterlife is the same fate that those who established initiation into the mysteries assigned to the “uninitiated” (*amuetos*) in Hades, namely to be cast down into the mud; by contrast, those who practised philosophy in the right way will arrive in Hades in a purified state and will dwell with gods (*Phd.* 69c3–7). It is worth noting that Socrates' defence of the philosophical life in the *Phaedo* starts by developing similes for the body in the direction of a negative *climax*, treating it first as an “obstacle” (*empodios koinonos*), then as an “evil” (*kakon*), before ending with an account of the afterlife in which, as in the case of the foolish and uninitiated in the *Gorgias*, the uninitiated body-lovers are cursed to a wretched fate on account of their cognitive failure to establish the correct proportion between body and soul, which correspond to disregarding, as far as possible, the affections of the body that hinder the cognitive life of the soul: “blessed are those who need nothing”, as Socrates neatly summarises it in the *Gorgias* (492e3–4).

Only hinted at and left undeveloped in the *agon* with Callicles in the *Gorgias*, it is within the framework of the *sunousia* with Socrates' companions

40 Virtues are true virtues if and only if “their proper value” (τὸ νόμισμα ὀρθόν) is defined by *phronesis*, μετὰ φρονήσεως, that is by the soul's cognitive process in ζήτησις, without the body as an ἐμπόδιος κοινωνός (*Phd.* 65a9–b1).

41 According to Christopher Rowe, Socrates “is here ascribing an unconscious hedonism to the many, as in *Prot.* (351b–360e): they may think of themselves as employing other criteria of choice (the good, the fine), but in reality they measure everything by the single yardstick of what will maximise pleasure and minimise pain”. *Plato: Phaedo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993), 149.

42 For the ἀφροσύνη of the body as cause of cognitive error see Chad Jorgenson, *The Embodied Soul in Plato's Later Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 42–47.

in the *Phaedo* that Plato has Socrates fully assert the pre-eminence of the soul over the body, a stance from which the relationship of both soul's proper life with the practice of dying and the relationship of *phronesis* to the true virtues is derived. From this point of view, what Sedley misinterprets as a "radical recasting of the intellectualistic model" of the unity of virtues in the *Phaedo*, after the alleged "temporary abandonment of the intellectualistic account" in the *Gorgias*,[43] only depends on the dialogical context of the *Phaedo*, where, on the basis of his interlocutor's agreement to consider the body as an obstacle for the cognitive life of the soul, Socrates is able to develop a line of reasoning leading to an account of the virtues based on *phronesis* as the proper excellence of the soul, which must be set against any hedonistic-based understanding of virtue. Such an outright cognitive account of the virtues is possible only thanks to Simmias' initial assent to the premise that the body is an obstacle for the cognitive life of the soul, a stance which Socrates only indirectly hints at in the *Gorgias*, mainly through the example of foolish and uninitiated people in the leaky jars passage (493a5–494a5) and through the reference to the essential knowledge of geometric equality (507e6–508a8).

7 Closing Remarks

As I have tried to show, the absence of *phronesis* in Socrates' account of the virtuous individual in the *Gorgias* is due to the dialogical context of the confrontation with Callicles, the Platonic Socrates' sole encounter with a politician of the next generation in the whole corpus.[44] As scholars increasingly tend to underline, the results that Plato's Socrates achieves through his question-and-answer method depend on the dramatic and dialogical context, on his interlocutor's intellectual development and ethical depth, and on the openness to discussion necessary for the Socratic method to achieve its full potential. The nature of Socrates' investigations, whether aporetic or positive, thus varies in relation to the contexts and dispositions of the interlocutors. In the *Gorgias*, the joint enquiry which was possible in collaboration with the two Sicilian rhetoricians is broken off as the result of the entrance of Callicles, who expresses his strong beliefs according to the mode of the unphilosophical *epideixis*. Callicles' significant lack of openness to discussion during the following

43 Sedley, "Unity," 72 and 76.

44 It is no coincidence that Callicles is a young man whose identity has no definite grounding in historical reality. On the puzzle of Callicles' historicity see Debra Nails, *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), 75–77.

examination shapes the conclusions that Socrates arrives at in the *recapitulatio.* For Socrates' method can only proceed by building upon the interlocutor's arguments and as a result of the latter's openness to engage in philosophical dialogue. From this perspective, one should consider Socrates' results with respect to the treatment of *phronesis*: its absence in the *Gorgias* and its pivotal role elsewhere. With his bold eristic, frankness, his unwillingness to be refuted and his refusal to readdress his initial commitments, Callicles is the worst possible interlocutor for the Platonic Socrates, representing the precise opposite to the speakers in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* II–X, who, by contrast, act as ideal interlocutors, enabling Plato's main character to express his full potential, his method of producing the best possible results, with no restrictions due to the unworthy and unphilosophical disposition of his interlocutor. That *phronesis* plays a role in Socrates' understanding of human excellence in light of the varying dialogical contexts and interlocutors is particularly evident in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. In both dialogues, Plato sets the scene for Socratic *sunousia*: in the *Phaedo*, with his companions, in the *Republic,* with the friends Glaucon and Adeimantus, all of them driven by the wish to listen to – and the desire to be persuaded by – Socrates' defence of the philosophical life, as a hopeful practice of dying in the *Phaedo*, and, in *Republic* II, of the usefulness of justice for the pursuit of full and true happiness. Callicles is not a boy with the inclination to be tested, he is not a "wise man" (*sophos*) whose supposed knowledge is yet to be verified. Rather, Callicles represents, even more than the jurors who return the guilty verdict in the *Apology*, the obstacles presented by philosophy's interaction with politics. He also points to the limits of the Socratic method when it is applied to interlocutors who not only lack philosophical *paideia*, but who are also unwilling to undertake (to paraphrase Socrates' words in the *Republic*) the paideutic *periagoge* of *phronesis* towards the good.

Staging the failure of Socrates' confrontation with the evil but skilled politicians of contemporary Athens, the *Gorgias* plays a key role in Plato's literary and philosophical project built around the character of Socrates, representing the foil against which Plato conceives the *Republic-Timaeus-Critias* trilogy. For Socrates' finest of all inquiries on the best way of life is only possible outside the physical and metaphorical city walls of Athens' struggles.

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CHAPTER 8

Warum ist Unrechttun schlimmer als Unrechtleiden?

David Machek

Abstract

The thesis that committing injustice is worse for the agent than suffering it belongs to the famous theses of the Gorgias. However, Plato does not explain what precisely the injury of the soul amounts to, or how precisely is such an injury caused by the unjust action. This article makes a new contribution to both these questions. Firstly, I propose that the injury can be best understood as a deficiency in function. This functional deficiency lies in the incapacity of the soul to rule over itself. Secondly, I propose how is this incapacity inflicted by committing injustice. Unjust action strengthens the bad or excessive desires of the soul, so that they come to have an undue influence on our motivation. Specifically, they shape decisively what "seems best" to us.

Keywords

soul – function – injustice – action – desire

1 Einleitung[1]

Die These, dass anderen Unrecht anzutun für den Unrechttuenden selber ein grösseres Übel ist als von anderen Unrecht zu erleiden, gehört zu den bekanntesten Thesen des Dialogs *Gorgias*. Obwohl sich die Kommentatoren weitgehend einig sind, dass der ausdrückliche Beweis dieser These, den Platon in 474c–475e vorlegt, in mehreren Hinsichten unbefriedigend ist, wurde die Plausibilität der These selbst nie wirklich in Frage gestellt. Das kommt wohl daher, dass sich dem *Gorgias* und anderen Dialogen, vor allem der *Politeia*, eine durchaus platonische Begründung dieser These entnehmen lässt: Das

1 Work on this publication was supported by Primus grant awarded by Charles University (project code PRIMUS/23/HUM007).

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Unrechttun ist besonders schädlich für die Seele des Unrechttuenden. Da die Seele wertvoller als der Körper oder das Eigentum, auf die sich das Unrechtleiden typischerweise bezieht, ist, folgt daraus, dass das Unrechttun tatsächlich für den Unrechttuenden schlimmer, d.h. schädlicher ist als Unrechtleiden.[2] Worin der Schaden an der Seele liegt sowie wie genau er durch das ungerechte Handeln entsteht, wird allerdings von Platon im *Gorgias* nicht ausdrücklich erklärt. Das Ziel dieses Aufsatzes ist es, zu diesen beiden Fragen einen neuen Beitrag zu leisten.

Obwohl diese Fragen nicht im Mittelpunkt der *Gorgias*-Forschung standen, haben sich mehrere Kommentatoren ausdrücklich und einsichtsvoll mit ihnen beschäftigt.[3] Vor allem der Vorschlag Stemmers, dass der Seelenschaden in einer Art Handlungseinschränkung liegt sowie die Interpretation von Brickhouse und Smith, die die Schädlichkeit des Unrechttuns mit Hinblick auf den verzerrenden Einfluss der Begierden auf Meinungen erklärt, erweisen sich als aussichtsreich. Mein Beitrag wird hauptsächlich darin bestehen, diese Ansätze weiterzubringen bzw. zu präzisieren. Im Vergleich zu diesen Aufsätzen zeichnet sich meine Interpretation dadurch aus, dass sie die oben gestellten Fragen durch eine möglichst genaue Auffassung der Moralpsychologie im *Gorgias*, insbesondere im Vergleich zur *Politeia*, zu beantworten suchen wird.

Mein Beitrag besteht aus zwei Vorschlägen. Erstens lege ich nahe, dass man den durch Unrechttun verursachten Schaden an der Seele im Sinne eines Funktionsmangels der Seele auffassen kann bzw. soll. Diese funktionelle Beeinträchtigung der Seele besteht in dem Unvermögen der Seele, über sich selbst zu herrschen, bzw. in der Unfähigkeit zu tun, was man tun will. Zweitens schlage ich vor, wie genau das Unrechttun dieses Unvermögen verursacht. Das Unrechttun stärkt die schlechten bzw. übermässigen Begierden der Seele, so dass sie einen unangemessenen Einfluss auf unsere Motivation gewinnen, indem sie den „Schein des Besten" auf eine entscheidende Weise prägen. Diese Auffassung beruht auf einem einzigartigen moralpsychologischen Entwurf, der sich sowohl von der „intellektualistischen" Moralpsychologie der früheren

2 Allerdings scheint Platon an dieser Stelle der offensichtlichen Möglichkeit, dass auch die Seele Übel erleiden kann, etwa durch schlechte oder mangelnde Erziehung, keine Rechnung zu tragen. Es ist wohl möglich, dass ein Unrecht an der Seele zu erleiden genauso schlimm ist, oder sogar schlimmer, als durch die Seele ein Unrecht zu tun.

3 Siehe Hans Reiner, "'Unrechttun ist schlimmer als Unrechtleiden'. Zur Beweisführung des Sokrates in Platons Gorgias," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 11 (1957); Peter Stemmer, "Unrecht Tun ist schlechter als Unrecht Leiden. Zur Begründung moralischen Handelns im platonischen *Gorgias*," *Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung* 39 (1985); Thomas Brickhouse und Nicholas Smith, "Socrates on How Wrongdoing Damages the Soul," *Journal of Ethics* 11 (2007).

Dialoge wie z.B. *Protogaras*, als auch von der Theorie der dreiteiligen Seele in der *Politeia* unterscheidet.

Der Aufsatz gliedert sich in vier Teile. Der erste Teil fasst zusammen und diskutiert, was Platon explizit über Unrechttun und Seelenschaden im *Gorgias* sagt. Im zweiten Teil werden wir uns der Auffassung der Ungerechtigkeit und des Seelenschadens in der *Politeia* zuwenden, welche wichtige Hinweise für die Interpretation des *Gorgias* liefert. Der dritte Teil wird dann auf den Entwurf der Moralpsychologie im *Gorgias* eingehen. Im vierten Teil werden wir schliesslich eine Antwort auf unsere Fragen darbieten.

2 Unrechttun und Seelenschaden im *Gorgias*

Der von Platon vorgelegte Beweis unserer These beruht grundsätzlich auf einer *reductio* der Bedeutung des Wortes *aischron* bzw. *kalon* (*Grg.* 474c–475e). Die Beweisführung erfolgt in den folgenden Schritten. (1) Es wird von zwei Behauptungen ausgegangen, nämlich dass (1a) Unrechtleiden (*adikeisthai*) schlechter (*kakion*) ist als Unrechttun, aber (1b) Unrechttun (*adikein*) hässlicher (*aischion*) ist als Unrechtleiden. (2) Etwas kann aber nur dadurch hässlicher sein, dass es entweder an Schmerz oder am Schlechten, im Sinne des mangelnden Gebrauchswertes, Übergewicht hat. (3) Diejenigen aber, die Unrecht tun, empfinden keineswegs mehr Schmerz als diejenigen, die Unrecht erleiden (*Grg.* 475c). (4) Daher muss das Unrechttun ein Übergewicht an Schlechtem haben. Der Schluss: Unrechttun ist tatsächlich schlechter als Unrecht erleiden.

Dieser Beweis wurde als eher zweifelhaft erachtet.[4] Man hat, unter anderem, folgende zwei Einwände erhoben. Erstens ist die Prämisse (2), d.h. die Zerteilung des Wortes *kalon* in zwei weitgehend unabhängige Bedeutungsschichten, problematisch. Die Plausibilität von (1b) beruht ja auf der einzigartigen Bedeutung von *aischron*, die eine ganz besondere Art von Schlechtigkeit andeutet, die schamerregend und eben mit Empfindungen von Lust und Unlust verbunden ist, und nicht völlig auf die Schlechtigkeit im Sinne des mangelnden Gebrauchswertes zurückgeführt werden kann. Zweitens kann gegen (3) eingewendet werden, dass Unrechttun auch für den Unrechttuenden schmerzhaft sein kann, ja sogar schmerzhafter als für den Unrechterleidenden. Platon selbst führt darüber aus, z.B. in *Politeia* IX, dass das Leben eines Tyrannen aufgrund der Ungerechtigkeit seiner Seele voll Angst und Schmerz ist (*Resp.* 576b–579e).

4 Hermann Gauss, *Handkommentar zu den Dialogen Platons, Zweiter Teil, Erste Hälfte* (H. Lang: Bern, 1952); Reiner, “Unrechttun ist schlimmer”; Stemmer, “Unrecht Tun ist schlechter”.

Ausserdem zeigt der Beweis nur, *dass* Unrechttun schlechter ist als Unrechtleiden, aber nicht *wieso* dies der Fall ist. Wenn die Schlechtigkeit des Unrechttuns tatsächlich im Sinne der Unbrauchbarkeit bzw. Schädlichkeit zu verstehen ist, dann möchte man wissen, was für ein Schaden durch das Unrechttun entsteht, bzw. impliziert ist. Sokrates beantwortet diese Frage implizit, wenn er kurz danach auf den Nutzen der Bestrafung eingeht: Derjenige, der ein Unrecht begangen hat, muss schnellstens zum Richter gehen, wie zu einem Arzt, „und er muss sich beeilen, damit die Krankheit der Ungerechtigkeit nicht chronisch wird (ὅπως μὴ ἐγχρονισθὲν τὸ νόσημα τῆς ἀδικίας) und die Seele unterschwellig krank und unheilbar macht" (*Grg.* 480a–b). Die Ungerechtigkeit ist also die Krankheit der Seele, und da die Seele wertvoller ist als Besitz und Körper (*Grg.* 477b–c), zeigt sich die Ungerechtigkeit als „das größte Übel" (*Grg.* 477e).[5]

Die Idee der Ungerechtigkeit als die Krankheit der Seele wirft zwei Fragen auf. Erstens: Wie genau ist die Beziehung zwischen den ungerechten Taten und der Ungerechtigkeit als Zustand der Seele zu verstehen? Oder, anders gesagt: Sind die ungerechten Taten die Ursachen der Ungerechtigkeit, wie der oben zitierte Abschnitt andeutet, oder setzt bereits das Unrechttun die Schlechtigkeit der Seele voraus? Zweitens: Meine körperliche Krankheit ist in einem offensichtlichen Sinne schlecht für *mich*, indem sie meine körperliche Gesundheit gefährdet. Eine Analogie auf der seelischen Ebene wäre eine seelische Krankheit, wie Depression, die seelisches Leiden verursacht. Aber Ungerechtigkeit scheint keine seelische Krankheit in diesem Sinne zu sein. Menschen mit einer Depression sind nicht unbedingt ungerecht, und diejenigen ohne jegliche psychische Störung sind nicht unbedingt gerecht. Wenn wir nun zwischen zwei Arten der seelischen Störung unterscheiden müssen, einer medizinischen und einer moralischen, wobei für Platon in diesem Kontext nur die moralische Störung relevant ist, stellt sich die Frage in welchem Sinne diese moralische Störung ein Leiden darstellt. Könnten im Prinzip auch Menschen mit einem verdorbenen Charakter ein durchaus zufriedenes Leben haben?

Die Antwort auf die erste Frage hängt weitgehend von der genauen Auffassung des Wortes „Unrechttun" (*adikein*) und seines Geltungsbereiches ab. Stellen wir uns einen Richter vor, der einen unschuldigen Menschen zum Tode verurteilt. Als er sein Urteil fällte, haben alle Beweise eindeutig für die Schuld dieser Person gesprochen. Obwohl dieser Richter diesem unschuldigen Menschen doch Unrecht angetan hat, hat er *bona fide* und ohne jegliche

5 Vgl. dazu das Argument Sokrates' im *Kriton* (47b–48e), dass ein Leben mit einer beschädigten Seele nicht lebenswert ist, genauso oder noch weniger als ein Leben mit einem ruinierten Körper.

Fahrlässigkeit seine Pflicht erfüllt. Wird er durch diese Tat seine Seele beschädigen? Tatsächlich grenzt Platon den Bereich des Unrechttuns im eigentlichen Sinne nie ausdrücklich ab. In der Regel verbindet er jedoch ungerechtes Handeln mit einer ungerechten Seele, die durch ungezügeltes Streben nach Befriedigung der Begierde verdorben ist. Daher merkt auch Platon an, dass man nur „durch Ungerechtigkeit" (*adikiai*) Unrecht tun kann (*Grg.* 520d2). Die Tyrannen sind das paradigmatische Beispiel der ungerecht handelnden Menschen. Dies würde daher nicht auf den Fall des Richters zutreffen.

Einerseits setzt also Unrechttun im strengen Sinne bereits eine gewisse Ungerechtigkeit der Seele des Handelnden voraus. In diesem Sinne ist also Unrechttun für den Handelnden bereits dadurch schlechter als Unrechtleiden, dass er sich in diesem üblen Zustand der Ungerechtigkeit befindet. Andererseits kann Unrechttun die Ungerechtigkeit der Seele vermutlich weiter vertiefen und festigen, so dass die Seele eventuell nicht mehr heilbar ist. Darum ist es auch wichtig, den Arzt / den Richter rechtzeitig aufzusuchen, um das Fortschreiten der Krankheit anzuhalten. Die Antwort auf die Frage, wie genau Unrechttun den Zustand der Seele weiter verschlimmert, beruht allerdings auf der genauen Auffassung des Wesens dieses Zustandes und dessen Ursachen. Das führt uns zu der zweiten oben gestellten Frage. Warum ist die Ungerechtigkeit der Seele nicht nur moralisch verwerflich, sondern auch schädlich? Einen Hinweis liefert Platon in der folgenden Beschreibung der ungerechten Seele nach dem Tod am Ende des Dialogs *Gorgias*:

> Alles ist deutlich sichtbar an der Seele, wenn sie vom Körper entkleidet worden ist, sowohl was sie von Natur aus mitbekommen hat wie auch die Veränderungen (*ta pathemata*), die der Mensch durch das Betreiben dieser und jener Sache an der Seele abgekommen hat. Wenn sie nun zum Richter kommen, stellt Rhadamantys sie auf und betrachtet die Seele eines jeden, ohne zu wissen, wem sie gehört. Sondern oft hat er sich die des Grosskönigs vorgenommen oder irgendeines anderen Königs oder Machthaber und erkannt, dass nichts Gesundes an der Seele ist, sondern dass sie durchgepeitscht ist und voll von Narben als Folge von Meineiden und Ungerechtigkeit. Das hat jede Handlung von ihm als Abdruck in der Seele hinterlassen (ἑκάστη ἡ πρᾶξις αὐτοῦ ἐξωμόρξατο εἰς τὴν ψυχήν), und alles ist krumm als Folge der Lüge und Betrügerei (σκολιὰ ὑπὸ ψεύδους καὶ ἀλαζονείας) und nichts ist gerade, weil sie ohne Wahrheit aufgewachsen ist (διὰ τὸ ἄνευ ἀληθείας τεθράφθαι). Und er sah, dass die Seele infolge von Macht und Schwelgerei und Überheblichkeit und Unbeherrschtheit in den Handlungen voll ist von Asymmetrie und Hässlichkeit. (*Grg.* 524d–525a, übers. von Dalfen)

Diese Beschreibung zeigt auf, dass es eigentlich zwei Arten von Ursachen der seelischen Beschädigung gibt: einerseits ein Wahrheitsdefizit, andererseits ein Übermass der Begierden sowie das Vermögen (Macht) sie zu befriedigen. Es bleibt offen, ob diese zwei Ursachen auf verschiedene Weise auf die Seele wirken, bzw. ob es eine gewisse kausale Beziehung zwischen diesen zwei Ursachen gibt, so dass zum Beispiel die Lügen durch die Begierden verursacht werden oder umgekehrt, oder ob sie nur zwei verschiedene Aspekte der gleichen seelischen Schlechtigkeit sind.

Für die Frage, was das Ergebnis dieses degenerativen Prozesses ist, sowie für die genaue Begründung, warum es für den Handelnden schädlich ist, ist diese Beschreibung jedoch weniger zuträglich. Insbesondere ist es nicht klar, wie die Metaphorik der körperlichen Verletzungen bzw. Deformationen auf die Seele als eine unkörperliche Entität zu übertragen ist. Der Schaden wird grundsätzlich als ein struktureller Schaden aufgefasst (Krümmung, Asymmetrie), aber es wird hier nicht weiter ausgeführt, was für eine Struktur die Seele hat. Darüber hinaus stellt sich die Frage, ob sich aus der strukturellen Beschädigung auch eine funktionale Beeinträchtigung ergibt, und welcher Art diese Beeinträchtigung ist.

Allerdings finden wir im *Gorgias* an anderen Stellen vielversprechende Hinweise darauf, wie die Struktur der Seele und damit auch des seelischen Schadens aufgefasst werden könnte. Zudem setzt hier Platon die Struktur eng mit der Funktion in Verbindung. Jeder Hersteller zielt darauf, eine gewisse Ordnung hervorzubringen, indem er „jedes Element zwingt dem anderen (*to heteron toi heteroi*) zu entsprechen und zu ihm zu passen, bis er das Ganze zusammengestellt hat als eine wohlgeordnete Sache“ (*Grg.* 504a). Denn verschiedene Dinge, wie z.B. ein Haus, ein Schiff oder auch ein Körper, werden dadurch „brauchbar“ (*chreste*), dass sie eine gute Ordnung (*kosmos*) und Gestaltung (*taxis*) bekommen. Die gute Funktion beruht also auf einer guten Struktur. Dies gilt nun auch für die Seele: „Und wie ist es mit der Seele? Wird sie brauchbar sein, wenn sie Unordnung oder wenn sie eine gewisse Gestaltung und Ordnung bekommt? “ (*Grg.* 504b).

Leider legt Platon im *Gorgias* keine artikulierte Auffassung der Brauchbarkeit oder Funktion der Seele vor. Und was die Struktur der Seele betrifft, scheint er zwischen mehreren Elementen der Seele zu unterscheiden, wobei aber—wie wir in kurzem sehen werden—der Sinn dieser Einteilung unklar und umstritten bleibt. Erst in der *Politeia* erarbeitet Platon eine ausdrückliche und systematische Theorie der seelischen Struktur und Funktion. Aus diesem Grund werde ich mich nun der *Politeia* zuwenden und erörtern, inwiefern sich die Auffassung des Seelenschadens im *Gorgias* mit Blick auf die *Politeia* deuten liesse.

3 Die beschädigte Seele in der *Politeia*

Wie im *Gorgias* charakterisiert Platon in der *Politeia* den Zustand der gerechten Seele im Sinne der Gestaltung und Ordnung. Allerdings beruht in der *Politeia* diese Idee auf einer ausdrücklichen Auffassung der seelischen Struktur im Sinne von drei verschiedenen Elementen: dem Vernünftigen, mit dem wir lernen, dem Mutartigen, mit dem wir mutig sind, und dem Begehrenden, mit dem wir die Vergnügungen des Essens und der Fortpflanzung und allen ähnlichen Freuden begehren (IV 436a–b). Wie in der Polis wird in der Seele die Ordnung und Gerechtigkeit dann herrschen, wenn jedes Element die ihm eigene Aufgabe gut ausübt:

> (Der gerechte Mensch) erlaubt nämlich keinem Teile in sich, Fremdartiges zu tun, noch daß die Teile seiner Seele vielgeschäftig aufeinander übergreifen; vielmehr hat er sein Hauswesen wohl bestellt, ist über sich selbst Herr geworden und hat Ordnung in sich geschaffen; er ist sich selber Freund geworden und hat jene drei Teile in ein harmonisches Verhältnis gebracht. … (*Resp*. IV 443d3–e1)

Neben den oben genannten Aufgaben jedes Seelenteiles steht auch jedem Seelenteil die Aufgabe zu, entweder zu herrschen oder beherrscht zu werden. Nur der Vernunft kommt es zu, zu herrschen (*archein*), „weil sie weise ist und die Sorge für die ganze Seele hat" (*Resp.* IV 441e5). Dank dieser auf das Ganze bezogene Weisheit kann die Vernunft gewährleisten, dass jeder Seelenteil seine Aufgabe gut erfüllt bzw. erfüllen kann und dass eine mässige und dauerhafte Befriedigung aller Seelenteile möglich sein wird. Dieser Zustand der Seele wird auch „Beherrschtheit" oder „Selbstbeherrschtheit" (*enkrateia*) genannt (*Resp.* IV 431a–b).

Über den genauen Sinn der Seelenteilung wurde in der Forschung viel diskutiert: sind diese Elemente homunkulus-artige Teile, i.e. selbstständige, in sich integrierte und komplexe Einheiten,[6] oder sind sie eher nur unterschiedliche Aspekte eines Ganzen, das sich auf die Summe dieser Aspekte nicht zurückführen lässt?[7] Mit dieser komplizierten Frage können wir uns hier nicht

6 z.B. Christopher Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast: His Later Ethics and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Hendrik Lorenz, *The Brute Within: Appetitive Desire in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006).

7 z.B. Anthony Price, *Mental Conflict* (London: Routledge, 1995); Jennifer Whiting "Psychic Contingency in the Republic," in *Plato and the Divided Soul*, hrsgb. Rachel Barney, Tad Brennan und Charles Brittain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

ausführlich auseinandersetzen. Es genügt, zwei Merkmale der Dreiteilung festzulegen, die relativ unkontrovers sein sollten. Erstens geniessen verschiedene Teile der Seele eine relativ hohe Autonomie, indem alle ihre eigenen Begierden, Freuden und auch Meinungen haben bzw. haben können.[8] Zweitens ist jeder Teil der Seele ein potenzieller Handlungsbeweger. Das bedeutet, dass er die ganze Seele zu einer bestimmten Handlung bewegen kann, falls er genügend stark, relativ zu den anderen Elementen, dazu ist.[9] Aus dieser handlungsbewegenden Autonomie aller drei Seelenteile ergibt sich die Gefahr, dass die Seele als Ganzes nicht von der Vernunft, sondern von einem der anderen Teile beherrscht wird, so dass alle vorgenommenen Handlungen ausschliesslich vernunftlose oder sogar vernunftwidrige Ziele verfolgen.

Dies ist der Zustand der ungerechten Seele. Die Degeneration der Seele von Gerechtigkeit zu Ungerechtigkeit wird von Platon ausführlich in seiner Auffassung der tyrannischen Seele in Buch IX beschrieben. Der löwen- und schlangenartige Seelenteil wächst „unverhältnismässig“ (*anarmostos*) (*Resp.* IX 590b1) und zerdrückt und überwältigt dadurch den besten, vernünftigen Teil. Das hat zur Folge, dass „der übelste und verrückteste“ Teil zum Herrscher, während der „anständigste“ Teil zum Knecht wird (*Resp.* IX 577c), was wiederum dazu führt, dass die Seele im Ganzen „stets ärmlich und unbefriedigend“ (*Resp.* IX 578a1–2) wird, da die Herrschaft der vernunftlosen Teile nicht in der Lage ist, so zu herrschen, dass Ordnung und Harmonie unter den verschiedenen Teilen geschaffen werden kann. Platon setzt hierbei voraus, dass der begehrende Seelenteil durch das Unrechttun „stark“ (*ischyron*) wird. Je ungerechter man handelt, desto stärker wird der schlangenartige Teil. Diese Annahme wird eigentlich nie erklärt. Es geht vermutlich darum, dass das Unrechttun in der Regel die Begierden, die es motivieren, befriedigt und dadurch stärkt.[10]

Die ungerechte Seele ist ungeordnet, verarmt und unbefriedigt. Ist dies der Sinn, in dem sie beschädigt wird, oder geht der Schaden darüber hinaus? Lloyd Gerson hat vorgeschlagen, dass, indem die Ungerechtigkeit und die ungerechte Handlung eine Abdankung der Vernunft bedeutet und nur die Vernunft eine Einheit der Seele gewährleisten kann, der Schaden als eine

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8 *Resp.* IV 437b–c, IV 442b–d, IX 574d–575a, IX 580d3–587e.

9 Diese Annahme zeigt sich ganz klar in der Abhandlung Platons über die verschiedenen Arten der seelischen und politischen Verfassung in Bücher VIII und IX der *Politeia*. Jeder Teil der Seele kann zur dominanten Kraft der gesamten Seele werden, und dadurch die entsprechende Handlung durchsetzen, wie z.B. das Mutartige sein Verlangen durch eine Gewalttat durchsetzt (*Resp.* IX 586c8–10).

10 So auch Thomas Brickhouse und Nicholas Smith, *Socratic Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 106.

Art „self-deconstruction“ verstanden werden könnte.[11] Laut Peter Stemmer wiederum besteht der Schaden in einer Beschränkung der Handlungsmöglichkeiten, der dadurch entsteht, dass der Verzicht auf intellektuelle Reflexion den Handlungsraum des ungerechten Menschen wesentlich verengt.[12] Obwohl beide Vorschläge eine gewisse Plausibilität haben, steht noch eine andere Erklärung zur Verfügung, die näher an den Text herangeht. Die wohl schlimmste Folge der Ungerechtigkeit ist, dass die ungerechte Seele ihre Aufgabe oder Funktion (*ergon*) nicht mehr ausüben kann. Diese Funktion wird in Buch I wie folgt definiert:

> Gehe nun einen Schritt weiter und überlege dir folgendes: gibt es auch eine Aufgabe der Seele, die du mit gar nichts anderem auf der Welt erfüllen könntest? Zum Beispiel: für etwas sorgen oder regieren oder sich über etwas beraten und alles das? Könnten wir dies gerechterweise irgendjemand anderem anvertrauen als der Seele, und müssen wir nicht sagen, es sei ihr zu eigen? (*Resp.* I 353d3–7)

Die Seele wird ihre Aufgabe nur dann gut erfüllen, setzt Platon fort, wenn sie ihre eigentümliche Gutheit, d.h. die Gerechtigkeit, besitzt. Dies kommt daher, dass in der gerechten Seele die Vernunft die führende Rolle übernimmt, und die oben angeführten Aufgaben der Seele am ehesten der Vernunft zuzuschreiben sind. Wie oben erwähnt wird nur die gerechte oder von der Vernunft beherrschte Seele imstande sein zu regieren, was aber auch bedeutet „über sich selbst zu regieren“ (*archein auton autou*; *Resp.* IV 443d6). In Buch IX deutet Platon diese Unbeherrschtheit als eine Art Sklaverei und zieht daraus den folgenden Schluss: „Und so wird auch die tyrannisch regierte Seele, um von der Seele als Ganzem zu sprechen, am wenigsten das tun, was sie eigentlich will (ἥκιστα ποιήσει ἃ ἂν βουληθῇ). Mit Gewalt vom Stachel getrieben, ist sie allzeit von Schrecken und Reue gefüllt.“ (*Resp.* IX 577e1–4)[13]

Wir sehen also, dass sich die Theorie des Seelenschadens in der *Politeia* sowohl auf der strukturellen als auch auf der funktionalen Ebene artikulieren lässt. Der strukturelle Schaden gleicht einem Missverhältnis oder einer Disharmonie unter verschiedenen Seelenteilen. Daraus ergibt sich die funktionelle Beeinträchtigung, die vor allem darin besteht, dass die Seele unfähig ist, über

11 Lloyd Gerson, “Socrates’ Absolutist Prohibition of Wrongdoing,” *Apeiron* 30 (1997).

12 Peter Stemmer, “Unrecht Tun ist schlechter,” 517–518.

13 Die Verbindung zwischen die Unbeherrschtheit und das Unvermögen zu tun, was man tun will, erfolgt aber fast analytisch: sich nicht zu beherrschen heisst eben etwas zu tun, was man nicht tun will.

sich selbst zu herrschen, was auch bedeutet, dass die Person mit dieser Seele unfähig ist, das zu tun, was sie tun will. Das Unrechttun ist nicht nur eine Folge, sondern auch eine Ursache dieses Zustandes, indem das ungerechte Handeln zur Befriedigung, und dadurch zum übermässigen Wachstum des begehrenden Teils, beiträgt.

Nun stellt sich die Frage, inwiefern sich diese Auffassung des strukturellen und funktionellen Seelenschadens von der *Politeia* auf den *Gorgias* übertragen lässt. Was die funktionelle Beschädigung betrifft, finden wir eine auffällige Parallele. Die Unfähigkeit das zu tun, was man tun will, ist ja genau die Diagnose, die Sokrates im *Gorgias* den vermeintlich Mächtigen stellt: „[S] owohl die Rhetoren wie auch die Tyrannen in den Städten [haben] sehr wenig Macht[,...] denn sie tun nichts von dem, was sie wollen (οὐδὲν γὰρ ποιεῖν ὧν βούλονται)" (*Resp.* V 466d5–e1).[14] Auch hier ist dieses Unvermögen eng mit der Unbeherrschtheit verbunden. Beruht diese Auffassung des Mangels der seelischen Funktion auch auf der entsprechenden strukturellen Teilung der Seele? Setzt Platon bereits im *Gorgias* eine Proto-Version der Seelenteilung von der *Politeia* voraus? Dies ist eine heikle und in der Forschung umstrittene Frage. Es ist anzumerken, dass die Auffassung der seelischen Funktion im ersten Buch der *Politeia* der Dreiteilung der Seele vom vierten Buch vorausgeht, und diese nicht unbedingt voraussetzen muss. Es ist also im Prinzip möglich, dass Platon im *Gorgias* implizit mit der funktionellen Auffassung der beschädigten Seele aus der *Politeia* arbeitet, ohne damit auch die strukturelle Auffassung der *Politeia* übernehmen zu müssen.

4 Der moralpsychologische Entwurf im *Gorgias*

Was Platons Auffassung der seelischen Struktur im *Gorgias* betrifft, sind sich, wie gesagt, die Kommentatoren nicht einig. Einige haben dafür argumentiert, wie jüngst Dorion oder Lopes,[15] dass Platon im *Gorgias* zu einer „Zweiteilung" („bipartition") der Seele im Sinne von zwei funktional und sogar räumlich getrennten Teilen gelangt und dass er hier seine Theorie von der *Politeia* vorwegnimmt. Für diese Interpretation spricht vor allem die Tatsache, dass Platon

14 Die Unfähigkeit das zu tun, was man tun will, ergibt sich daraus, dass man sich unwissentlich auf eine verfehlte Auffassung des Guten stützt, und nicht unbedingt daraus, dass man wegen dem Machterhalt den *hoi polloi* folgen muss.

15 Louis-André Dorion, "Enkrateia and the partition of the soul in the Gorgias," in *Plato and the Divided Soul*, hrsgb. Rachel Barney, Tad Brennan und Charles Brittain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Daniel Lopes, "Moral Psychology in Plato's Gorgias," *Journal of Ancient Philosophy* 11 (2017).

besonders in der zweiten Hälfte des Dialogs auch Ansätze in Betracht zieht, die an eine Vielfalt von Motivationsquellen denken lassen und offensichtlich eine wichtige, von der Vernunft unabhängige Motivationsrolle den vernunftlosen Begierden zuschreiben. Insbesondere redet er über die Rolle der „Selbstbeherrschtheit“ (*enkrateia*), die den „Teil oder Aspekt der Seele, in dem die Begierden sind“ (τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς τοῦτο ἐν ᾧ ἐπιθυμίαι εἰσί) zügelt und regiert (*Grg.* 493a2–3).[16]

Diese Interpretation wird allerdings dadurch kompliziert, dass der *Gorgias* aus guten Gründen oft zu den Werken Platons gezählt wurde, die, wie der *Protagoras* oder die *Verteidigung*, eine monistisch-intellektualistische Auffassung der Motivation vertreten.[17] Diese Interpretation beruht auf der These des Sokrates, dass wir alles, was wir wollen und tun, um des Guten willen wollen und tun und dass wir deswegen immer nur das tun, was uns als „das Bessere“ oder „das Beste“ zu sein scheint. Dieser „Schein des Besten“ (ὅ τι ἂν δόξῃ βέλτιστον εἶναι) ist die einzige Motivationsquelle. Da nach der verbreiteten Auffassung dieser Schein des Besten auf unseren Meinungen (*doxai*) beruht, wurde die Motivationstheorie im *Gorgias* oft auch als ‚intellektualistisch‘ bezeichnet. Was wir auch immer tun, ist letztendlich durch unsere Meinungen über das Gute bestimmt. Dies schliesst die Existenz einer von der Auffassung des Guten unabhängigen Motivationsquelle aus: „this recognition of good-independent desires is incompatible with the Socratic Paradox“.[18] Deswegen haben sich einige Kommentatoren geweigert, über die „Teile“ der Seele zu sprechen in dem Sinne der seelischen Einteilung von der *Politeia*.

Da beide diese Interpretationen sich auf glaubwürdige Textstellen berufen können, bietet sich der Schluss an, dass Platon im *Gorgias* keine kohärente Theorie der Motivation vertritt und zwischen dem monistischen und dualistischen Ansatz schwankt. Es ist aber auch möglich, dass die Theorie kohärent ist, wobei sie die monistischen und dualistischen Ansätze auf verschiedenen Ebenen kombiniert. Ich versuche nun, eine solche Interpretation zu skizzieren.

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16 Es ist anzumerken, dass die Übersetzung “Teil” einigermassen interpretativ ist, da das Original bloss über „das, in dem die Begierden sind“, redet. Die Variante „Aspekt“ ist zurückhaltender, da sie offen lässt, ob die Begierden auch einem klar abgegrenzten Teil der Seele entsprechen.

17 z.B. Roxana Carone, “Calculating Machines or Leaky Jars? The Moral Psychology of Plato’s Gorgias,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 26 (2004); Brickhouse und Smith, *Socratic Moral Psychology*.

18 Terence Irwin, *Plato:* Gorgias, *Translated with Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 195.

Ich gehe von der Annahme aus,[19] dass man grundsätzlich zwischen zwei Arten der Motivation unterscheiden kann: der (zur Handlung) bewegenden Motivation, und der (zur Handlung) inklinierenden Motivation. Die inklinierende Motivation neigt uns dazu, eine bestimmte Handlung vorzunehmen, ohne uns unbedingt auch tatsächlich zu dieser Handlung zu bewegen. Die bewegende Motivation setzt sich immer in die entsprechende Handlung um. Jede bewegende Motivation entsteht aus einer inklinierenden Motivation: eine Inklination bewegt uns dann zur Handlung, wenn sie eine gewisse Eindringlichkeit gewinnt und sich gegen allfällige widersprüchliche oder hemmende Inklinationen durchsetzt. Ich kann z.B. dazu inkliniert sein, ein Bier zu trinken. Diese Inklination bewegt mich allerdings noch nicht dazu, tatsächlich ein Bier zu bestellen und es zu trinken. Um mich auch dazu zu bewegen, muss diese Inklination eine eindringliche Überzeugungskraft haben, indem sie aufzeigt, dass diese Handlung in dieser Situation unbedingt unternommen werden sollte.

Der moralpsychologische Entwurf im *Gorgias* kann als monistisch bezeichnet werden, da er nur eine einzige Quelle der bewegenden Motivation voraussetzt, nämlich den „Schein des Besten". Was immer mir als das Beste erscheint, das werde ich auch tun. Diese Motivation beruht auf einem allgemeinen, allen Menschen gemeinsamen Streben nach dem (für sie) Guten und Zuträglichen. Es bewegt dann zur Handlung, wenn es sich auf dieses oder jenes scheinbar Gute, oder genauer, auf das Beste, ausrichtet. Ist diese monistische Auffassung der bewegenden Motivation auch als intellektualistisch zu bezeichnen? Es besteht jedenfalls eine ausgeprägte Tendenz in der Forschung, den psychologischen Monismus mit dem psychologischen Intellektualismus zu verbinden. Eine gewisse Voreingenommenheit zugunsten der intellektualistischen Interpretation zeigt sich daran, dass die meisten englischen Übersetzungen des ὅ τι ἂν αὐτοῖς δόξῃ βέλτιστον εἶναι (*Grg.* 466e1), also „was immer auch ihnen das Beste zu sein scheint" als „whatever they *think* best" übersetzen.[20] Natürlich lässt zwar *dokein* an *doxa* als eine vernunftartige Leistung der Seele denken, was aber Platon mit dem Wort *dokein* in diesem Kontext hervorheben will, wird offensichtlich durch den Kontrast zwischen Sein und Schein und nicht

19 Falls die hier vorgestellte Interpretation zutreffend ist, wurde diese Annahme implizit auch von Platon geteilt.

20 So die Übersetzung von W. R. M. Lamb, *Plato Volume III. Lysis, Symposium, Gorgias* (Loeb Classical Library Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1925), *ad loc.*, und von Terence Irwin, *Gorgias*, *ad loc.* Vgl. mit Donald Zeyl's unbestimmtere Variante "whatever they see most fit to do." John Cooper, hrsgb. *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), *ad loc.*

dem zwischen Vernünftigem und Vernunftlosem bestimmt. *Dokein* selbst, im Vergleich zu *doxazein*, bezeichnet keine ausgesprochen intellektuelle epistemische Modalität. Das wird auch dadurch angedeutet, dass Platon im *Gorgias dokein* (*Grg.* 459e6–7) synonym zu *phainesthai* (*Grg.* 459c1) verwendet. Im Vergleich zu *doxazein* und *phaintesthai* scheint *dokein*, was den Kontrast zwischen intellektualistischem und nicht-intellektualistischem betrifft, neutral zu sein. Zwar benutzt Platon im *Gorgias*, wie im *Protagoras*, der *Verteidigung* oder im *Menon* auch das Wort *oiomai*, was tatsächlich für eine intellektualistische Auffassung des Guten spricht, aber er tut dies nur in einem einzigen Abschnitt (*Grg.* 468b–d). Es ist wohl möglich, dass sich in der terminologischen Verschiebung von *oiomai* zu *dokeo* auch eine Neigung dazu abzeichnet, den Einfluss der vernunftlosen seelischen Elemente auf unsere Auffassung des Guten einzuräumen.

Eine für die Unterscheidung zwischen intellektualistischer und nicht-intellektualistischer Motivation neutralere Auffassung des Scheins des Besten macht es einfacher, dem dualistischen Element im *Gorgias* Rechnung zu tragen. Dieser Dualismus sollte nämlich nicht auf der Ebene der bewegenden, sondern nur inklinierenden Motivation verstanden werden. Sowohl die Meinungen, richtige sowie falsche, als auch die Begierden, mässige sowie unmässige, können uns vermutlich zu einer bestimmten Handlung inklinieren. Die Begierden können uns nur dann zur Handlung bewegen, wenn sie sich gegen andere Inklinationen durchsetzen, indem sie unseren Schein des Besten auf eine entscheidende Weise prägen. Welche Inklination sich letztendlich durchsetzt, hängt von der spezifischen Verfassung eines Einzelnen ab, die wiederum von Erziehung und Bildung abhängt. Wenn uns die Begierden zu einer Handlung inklinieren können, sind sie von unserer Auffassung des (für uns) Guten tatsächlich unabhängig; wenn sie uns aber zu einer Handlung bewegen, sind sie von dieser Auffassung abhängig, weil sie sich nur dann durchsetzen können, wenn sie diese Auffassung entscheidend gestalten. Die Antwort auf die Frage, ob sich Platon bereits im *Gorgias* zu der Aufteilung der Seele bekannt hat, wird davon abhängen, was der Sinn, bzw. Zweck der Aufteilung eigentlich sein sollte. Insofern es um die Aufteilung im Sinne der verschiedenen Handlungsbeweger geht, wie in der *Politeia*, dann ist die Antwort vermutlich ‚Nein'. Insofern es um die Differenzierung verschiedener Arten der Inklination geht, dann kann die Antwort ‚Ja' sein.

Der Einfluss der Begierden auf den Schein des Besten ist dadurch angedeutet, dass die Mässigung der Begierde, anders als im *Protagoras,* aber auch anders als in der *Politeia*, zu der Hauptaufgabe der Erziehung, und zugleich wohl auch zu der hinreichenden Bedingung der Gerechtigkeit und damit auch des Glücks wird (*Grg.* 493a–494c, 503c–505c). Es ist auffällig, wie wenig

Sokrates im *Gorgias* über die Förderung der Vernunft oder Pflege der Meinungen redet, die den übermässigen Begierden entgegenwirken sollen (wie zum Beispiel das Erlernen des *metretike techne* im *Protagoras*). Wie John Cooper bemerkt hat, „,discipline' continues to mean for Socrates the *elimination* of appetites as demanding desires … and it does not include „reason's" overruling or dominating objectionable appetites."[21] Eine mögliche Erklärung dafür ist, dass Platon der Ansicht ist, dass die übermässigen Begierden mit Abstand die wichtigste Ursache dafür sind, dass wir uns bei unserer Einschätzung des für uns Zuträglichen, oder bei dem Schein des Besten, so oft irren. Die Unwissenheit ist dadurch letztendlich auf Zügellosigkeit zurückzuführen. Wir pflegen die Wahrhaftigkeit unseres Scheins des Besten am besten, indem wir unsere schlechten bzw. potenziell übermässigen Begierden im Griff haben. Diese Auffassung würde dann auch erklären, auf welche Weise die zwei obengenannten Ursachen des seelischen Schadens zueinander in Beziehung stehen: die Unwahrhaftigkeit erfolgt aus zügellosen Begierden.

Die Idee, dass die vernunftlosen Begierden unseren Schein des Besten einschneidend gestalten können, ist im *Gorgias* nie ausdrücklich formuliert. Allerdings ist sie in anderen Dialogen Platons angedeutet und erweist sich im Kontext des *Gorgias* nicht nur als durchaus möglich, sondern auch als äusserst plausibel und sinnvoll.[22] Im *Phaidon* bezeichnet Platon bekanntlich die Lust als einen Nagel, der die Seele an den Körper anhaftet, so dass die „Seele glaubt (*doxazei*), dass das wahr sei, was der Körper dafür aussagt" (*Phd.* 83d). Die in *Politeia* IX beschriebene Umwandlung der demokratischen in die tyrannische Seele besteht darin, dass sich unter dem Einfluss der wachsenden Begierden neue Meinungen (*doxai*) bilden, die die alten, richtigen „Meinungen über das Schöne und das Hässliche" zerdrücken und ersetzen (*Resp.* IX 574e–575a), so dass es keine „brauchbaren" (*chrestas*) „Meinungen und Neigungen" (*doxas e epithymias*) mehr in der Seele gibt (573a). Falls wir *dokein* nicht in einem spezifisch intellektualistischen Sinne verstehen, dann ist es noch offensichtlicher, wie die Begierde unseren Schein des Besten beherrschen können.

Insgesamt haben wir also keine eindeutigen textuellen oder philosophischen Gründe gefunden, die uns dazu zwingen würden, den moralpsychologischen

21 John Cooper, "Socrates and Plato in Plato's Gorgias," in *Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory*, ed. John Cooper (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 66.

22 In der Forschung wurde diese Interpretation mit Hinblick auf *Gorgias* am ausführlichsten wohl von Brickhouse und Smith erarbeitet: "So we are arguing that wrongdoing damages the soul by making the wrongdoer more and more susceptible to deceiving and incorrect assessments of what is in his own interest, assessments influenced by appetites and passions, which have their effects on the way in which we judge things by representing their intended objects as benefits." *Socratic Moral Psychology*, 107.

Entwurf des *Gorgias* bloss als eine Proto-Version der Theorie der *Politeia* IV–IX zu bezeichnen, die bereits implizit die Seelenteilung im Sinne der autonomen Handlungsbeweger voraussetzt oder voraussetzen muss. Vielmehr gibt es Raum dafür, die Moralpsychologie des *Gorgias* als einzigartig anzusehen, indem sie, anders als z.B. im *Protagoras*, die Rolle der vernunftabhängigen Motivation anerkennt, sie aber zugleich, anders als in der *Politeia*, nicht im Sinne des unabhängigen Handlungsbewegers versteht. Ich gestehe zu, dass diese Interpretation einigermassen spekulativ ist, aber in diesem Sinne schneidet sie nicht schlechter ab als die alternativen Interpretationen.

5 Schluss: Warum ist Unrechttun schlimmer als Unrechtleiden?

Wir sind jetzt in der Lage, eine relativ genaue und kohärente Auffassung des Seelenschadens und dessen Ursachen im *Gorgias* vorzuschlagen. Diese Auffassung besteht aus den folgenden Schritten:

1. Der gute Seelenzustand liegt in einer guten Struktur und / oder in der guten Ausübung der Funktion.
2. Eine Funktion der Seele ist zu herrschen, was auch bedeutet, über sich selbst zu herrschen.
3. Jeder Mensch tut immer das, was ihm als das Beste scheint.
4. Ungezügelte oder übermässige Begierde (= die inklinierenden Motivationen) prägen und verzerren den Schein des Besten (= die bewegende Motivation).
5. Unrechttun befriedigt die ungezügelten Begierden und stärkt sie dadurch.
6. Je stärker die Begierden werden, desto unfähiger wird die Seele, über sich selbst zu herrschen. (Folgt aus (3) in Kombination mit (4)).
7. Schluss: Unrechttun beschädigt die Seele, indem es sie in der Ausübung ihrer Funktion hindert.

Hier sind noch einige Bemerkungen zu einzelnen Schritten. Zum Schritt (1): Ich habe mich in der Auffassung des Seelenschadens stärker auf die funktionale als auf die strukturelle Beschädigung fokussiert. Diese Fokussierung ist dadurch angebracht, dass die genaue Bedeutung der strukturellen Seelenteilung im *Gorgias* äusserst unklar bleibt. Deswegen habe ich die Seelenteilung im Sinne der Funktion (verschiedene Inklinationen) und nicht im Sinne der Struktur (verschiedene Teile) interpretiert. Zum Schritt (2): Diese Auffassung der seelischen Funktion ist aus der *Politeia* importiert. Zum Schritt (4): Je nach einer mehr oder weniger intellektualistischen Interpretation des Scheins des Besten gestalten die Begierden diesen Schein entweder dadurch, dass sie unsere vernünftigen oder wahrhaftigen Meinungen verzerren (mehr

intellektualistisch, wie bei Brickhouse–Smith), oder gar zerdrücken und ersetzen (weniger intellektualistisch).

Zum Schluss ist zu bemerken, dass das Unrechttun tatsächlich schlechter ist für den Unrechttuenden als Unrecht zu erleiden, im Sinne der hier vorgeschlagenen Auffassung nur unter der Voraussetzung, dass man nicht diese Art von Schaden durch andere Personen erleiden kann. Falls es möglich wäre, eine genau solche seelische Beschädigung zu erleiden, ohne Unrecht zu tun, zum Beispiel durch eine fahrlässige oder gar schlechte Erziehung, die die unmässige Begierde zulässt oder sogar fördert, dann könnte es durchaus der Fall sein, dass Unrechtleiden doch mindestens so schlimm sein könnte wie das Unrechttun. Dies wirft die Frage auf, ob der wesentliche Seelenschaden nur durch eigene ungerechte Handlungen verursacht werden kann, oder ob man es doch durch die Handlungen anderer Personen erleiden kann. Auf diese Frage gibt Platon allerdings keine klare Antwort.[23]

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23 Ich möchte mich bei Filip Karfík, Jakub Jirsa und Vladimír Mikeš für ihre Verbesserungvorschläge zu diesem Aufsatz herzlich bedanken.

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PART 3

Politics and Way of Life

CHAPTER 9

De l'Amphion d'Euripide au Socrate de Platon : héroïsme tragique et héroïsme philosophique dans le *Gorgias*

Marie-Pierre Noël

Abstract

In the last part of the *Gorgias*, to build the debate between Socrates and Callicles, Plato reemploys thematic and structural elements of the *agon* of Euripides' *Antiope* between the two brothers Zéthos and Amphion, sons of Antiope and builders of the Theban walls. The importance of the reprise, made explicit by Plato, leads one to wonder about its meaning in the dialogue, since the latter contains a severe rebuttal of tragedy, which it criticises as a form of rhetoric. To answer this question, we will study how the *agon* of the *Antiope* is integrated into the plot of the *Gorgias* to highlight, in a kind of dramatic crescendo, the limits of the *elenchos* and the stakes of the choice of philosophical life, which implies a new heroism, different from the tragic one. Indeed, in the *Gorgias*, a new drama is played out, with a new hero, on a new stage, that of the Socratic dialogue.

Keywords

Plato – Gorgias – Euripides – Antiope – Socrates – heroism – elenchos – tragedy – philosophy – Socratic dialogue

1 Introduction

Dans la dernière partie du *Gorgias*, Platon s'approprie délibérément des éléments thématiques et structurels de l'*Antiope* d'Euripide. C'est essentiellement l'*agôn* entre les deux frères, fils d'Antiope et bâtisseurs des murs de Thèbes, Zéthos et Amphion, qui informe le débat entre Socrate et Calliclès. Dans cet *agôn*, Zéthos, partisan d'une vie pratique et active dans la cité, attaquait Amphion, partisan d'une vie contemplative consacrée à la musique. C'est aussi l'intervention du *deus ex machina* Hermès dans l'exodos qui serait transposée sous la forme du mythe eschatologique final, assurant la victoire de

Socrate-Amphion.[1] L'importance de la reprise, qui, contrairement aux modèles dramatiques utilisés dans d'autres dialogues, est explicitée par Platon, incite à s'interroger sur le sens particulier de la présence de l'*Antiope* dans le dialogue. Pourquoi le philosophe s'inspire-t-il du poète tragique, à la fois dans le contenu des propos qu'il prête à ses personnages et dans la forme de leurs échanges, qui semblent rejouer l'*agôn* d'Euripide, alors même que le dialogue contient une critique sévère de la tragédie, considérée comme une forme de rhétorique?[2]

Pour tenter de répondre à cette question, nous étudierons la manière dont l'*agôn* de l'*Antiope* est intégré dans la trame du *Gorgias* afin de mettre en lumière, dans une sorte de crescendo dramatique, les limites de l'*elenchos* et les enjeux du choix de vie philosophique. Car si le dialogue avait commencé avec la proclamation de la victoire de Gorgias par Calliclès, il semble bien s'achever sur celle de Socrate. Mais cette victoire écrasante s'accompagne d'une solitude extrême. Car le philosophe reste seul en scène, après avoir proposé à ses interlocuteurs un choix de vie révolutionnaire, qui tourne le dos aux idéaux de la cité d'Athènes représentée par Calliclès et ses modèles, Thémistocle et Périclès. De même que, dans la tragédie, devant un public de citoyens qui porte

1 Voir Andrea W. Nightingale, « Plato's *Gorgias* and Euripides' *Antiope* : A Study in Generic Transformation, » *Classical Antiquity* 11 (1992) repris dans Andrea W. Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue. Plato and the Construct of Philosophy* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1995).

2 D'où les hésitations que l'on voit dans les différentes interprétations proposées du Gorgias, entre parodie, transformation générique, inspiration philosophique, voire paratragédie. Pour Andrea Nightingale, Platon insisterait sur le modèle tragique dont il s'inspire et qu'il parodie pour souligner la transformation générique qu'il ferait subir à son modèle. Pour Franco Trivigno il faudrait plutôt parler de paratragédie, qui adapte une vision tragique de l'homme pour articuler une philosophie tragique. F. Trivigno, « Paratragedy in Plato's Gorgias, » *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 26 (2009). Voir aussi, sur le même sujet, James A. Arieti, « Plato's Philosophical *Antiope* : the *Gorgias*, » dans *Plato's Dialogues* : *New Studies and Interpretations*, éd. Gerald A. Press (Lanham, Md. : Rowman & Littlefield, 1993) ; Fritz-Gregor Herrmann, « Poetry in Plato's Gorgias, » dans *Plato and the Poets*, éd. Pierre Destrée et Fritz-Gregor Herrmann (Leiden: Brill, 2011) ; Michael Schramm, « Plato im Theater : Der Gorgias im Dialog mit Euripides' Antiope, » *Hermes* 148 (2020) et les articles récents d'Elisabetta Berardi, « Le *Gorgias* de Platon et l'*Antiope* d'Euripide. Entre distance formelle et réappropriation des savoirs anciens », et d'Andrea Capra, « Le *Gorgias* et les deux *Antiope*. Tragique et comique, » dans *Platon citateur. La réappropriation des savoirs antérieurs*, éd. Marie-Laurence Desclos (Paris : Classiques Garnier, 2021). Sur Platon et Euripide, David Sansone, « Plato and Euripides, » *Illinois Classical Studies* 21 (1996), sur Platon et la poésie, Fabio M. Giuliano, *Platone e la poesia. Teoria della composizione e prassi della ricezione* (Sankt Augustin : Academia Verlag, 2005), et Marie-Laurence Desclos, *Les dialogues de Platon entre tragédie, comédie et drame satyrique* (Grenoble : Jérôme Million, 2020).

les idéaux communautaires de la cité, le héros homérique est devenu, pour lui-même et pour les autres, un problème,[3] de même, dans le dialogue, le philosophe représente un risque pour la cité, dont il met en question les valeurs en proposant un choix de vie diamétralement opposé à celui de ses contemporains. Mais si l'*agôn* de l'*Antiope* fournit à Platon la trame de ce drame philosophique, l'Amphion du *Gorgias* permet de construire un héros d'un type nouveau : le philosophe.

2 Dangers et limites de l'*elenkhos*

À la fin du *Gorgias*, si le dernier mot reste à la philosophie, il n'en demeure pas moins que la victoire de Socrate ne semble pas complète et qu'elle est au demeurant bien amère.[4] La parole du philosophe s'avère du début à la fin inefficace devant ses interlocuteurs. Même s'il proclame sa victoire parce que ses thèses n'ont pas été réfutées et qu'elles sont donc « enchaînées et maintenues par des raisons de fer et d'acier »,[5] il n'a pas été à même de convaincre ses interlocuteurs, alors qu'il déclare lui-même rechercher cet accord.

Ainsi, Calliclès, à plusieurs reprises au cours de l'entretien, affirme ne pas être persuadé par Socrate.[6] Mais surtout ses réactions sont de plus en plus violentes : dès qu'il sent la faiblesse de ses arguments, il abonde en sarcasmes : « Je ne connais rien à tes sophismes, Socrate » ; « Où tendent ces sornettes? » ; « Je ne sais ce que tu veux dire » ; « Mais aussi, Gorgias, on reconnaît bien là Socrate : il vous pose des petites questions insignifiantes, par lesquelles il vous réfute » ; « Eh bien, Socrate, continue tes interrogations mesquines et menues, puisque tel est l'avis de Gorgias ».[7] Puis il refuse le recours de Socrate au mythe (493d)

3 Jean-Pierre Vernant, « Le moment historique de la tragédie en Grèce : quelques conditions sociales et psychologiques, » dans *Mythe et Tragédie en Grèce ancienne*, tome I, éd. Jean-Pierre Vernant et Pierre Vidal-Naquet (Paris : La Découverte, 2004), 14.

4 D'où la question de Eric R. Dodds : « Why is the Gorgias so bitter? » Voir *Plato*, Gorgias. *A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary*, ed. E. R. Dodds (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1959), 19.

5 *Grg*. 509c : Ταῦτα … κατέχεται καὶ δέδεται … σιδηροῖς καὶ ἀδαμαντίνοις λόγοις. Le texte et la traduction sont ici cités dans l'édition des Belles Lettres (Croiset, 1923).

6 *Grg*. 493d, 494a, 513c.

7 *Grg*. 497a–c : Οὐκ οἶδα ὅ τι λέγεις (…) Ἀλλ' ἀεὶ τοιοῦτός ἐστιν Σωκράτης, ὦ Γοργία· σμικρὰ καὶ ὀλίγου ἄξια ἀνερωτᾷ καὶ ἐξελέγχει (…) Ἐρώτα δὴ σὺ τὰ σμικρά τε καὶ στενὰ ταῦτα, ἐπείπερ Γοργίᾳ δοκεῖ οὕτως.

et s'entête encore en rappelant qu'il ne répond que pour complaire à Gorgias (501c). En 505b, il demande à Socrate de s'adresser à quelqu'un d'autre, provoquant ainsi la seconde intervention de Gorgias (506b) et ne participe plus vraiment à l'entretien, sauf pour marquer une désapprobation complète (511a) ou une désapprobation mitigée, dont la conclusion est « je ne me sens pas tout à fait convaincu » (οὐ πάνυ σοι πείθομαι, 513c). Même le mythe final marque l'impossibilité de s'entendre : c'est un *logos* pour Socrate et un *muthos* pour Calliclès (523a). Si le discours de Socrate semble s'imposer à la fin du dialogue, il s'impose donc *in absentia*, faute d'interlocuteur.

Parallèlement, cette impossibilité à communiquer exacerbe les tensions entre Socrate et ses compagnons, au point que Calliclès est de plus en plus exaspéré et que se précise la menace de la mort de Socrate. Pour Calliclès, comme pour l'Anytos du *Ménon*,[8] Socrate est un sophiste (497a : σοφίζει), qui remet en question les grandes figures de la démocratie athénienne. Il se refuse à prendre part à la vie de la cité en prônant une activité, la philosophie, qui est du ressort des enfants. C'est ainsi que, comme l'affirme Calliclès (486a–b), il serait incapable de se défendre lui-même et de défendre ses proches. La même idée est reprise par Socrate lui-même à la fin du *Gorgias*, mais au terme du dialogue, il s'agit d'un sort accepté et choisi, d'un « choix de vie » authentique :

> Je crois être – affirme Socrate – un des rares Athéniens, pour ne pas dire le seul, qui cultive le véritable art politique (οἶμαι μετ' ὀλίγων Ἀθηναίων, ἵνα μὴ εἴπω μόνος, ἐπιχειρεῖν τῇ ὡς ἀληθῶς πολιτικῇ τέχνῃ) et le seul qui mette cet art en pratique (καὶ πράττειν τὰ πολιτικά μόνος τῶν νῦν). Comme je ne cherche jamais à plaire par mon langage, que j'ai toujours en vue le bien et non l'agréable, (…), je n'aurai rien à répondre devant un tribunal. (…) Je serai jugé comme le serait un médecin traduit devant un tribunal d'enfants par un cuisinier. Vois un peu ce que pourrait répondre un pareil accusé devant un pareil accusateur, quand l'accusateur viendrait dire : « Enfants, cet homme que voici vous a maintes fois fait du mal à tous ; il déforme même les plus jeunes d'entre vous en leur appliquant le fer et le feu, il les fait maigrir, les étouffe, les torture! Il leur donne des breuvages amers, les force à souffrir la faim et la soif ; il n'est pas comme moi, qui ne cesse de vous offrir les mets les plus agréables et les plus variés. » Que pourrait dire le médecin victime d'une si fâcheuse aventure? S'il répond,

8 Voir aussi la réaction de Ménon (*Ménon* 80a–b), comparant Socrate à un poisson-torpille et commentant ainsi l'attitude de Socrate : « Tu as bien raison, crois-moi, de ne vouloir ni naviguer ni voyager hors d'ici : dans une ville étrangère, avec une pareille conduite, tu ne serais pas long à être arrêté comme sorcier. »

> ce qui est vrai : « C'est pour le bien de votre santé, enfants, que j'ai fait tout cela », quelle clameur va pousser le tribunal! (*Grg.* 521d–522a)

En se proclament le seul homme politique de la cité, Socrate marque définitivement son refus de la rhétorique de Gorgias, que Calliclès considère comme le seul art que l'on doit enseigner aux citoyens, aux *politai*. Mais dans le même temps, il confirme la menace de Calliclès : il renonce à se défendre au tribunal et va au-devant de la mort.

La scène reprend un certain nombre de thèmes déjà traités lors de l'entretien avec Gorgias et avec Pôlos, mais elle n'en reste pas moins saisissante en ce qu'elle donne à voir l'impuissance du philosophe dans la cité. Non seulement Calliclès n'est pas convaincu, mais ce qui se joue, c'est désormais la vie et la mort du philosophe, dont l'extériorité apparente provoque de la plus grande partie de ses interlocuteurs mise en accusation et rejet radical.

C'est que l'*elenchos* est un instrument dangereux, qui provoque la colère des interlocuteurs de Socrate, dont il remet en question non seulement la parole mais aussi les certitudes et l'équilibre. Le terme retrouve, de ce point de vue, sa dimension éthique originelle : il s'agit d'abord de la honte, l'épreuve de vérité de l'individu, confronté à la non-conformité de sa conduite ou de ses propos avec la morale conventionnelle. Dans le *Gorgias*, cette honte est conçue par Socrate non comme un moyen de mettre son adversaire au ban de la société, comme dans les procès, mais comme un moyen de révéler l'homme à lui-même. C'est ainsi que s'opposent *elenchos* rhétorique – dans lequel « un orateur croit réfuter son adversaire quand il peut produire en faveur de sa thèse des témoins nombreux et considérables » – et *elenchos* philosophique, qui s'appuie sur la vérité, non les faux témoignages, et sur l'accord des deux interlocuteurs.[9]

Mais cet accord est impossible. Pôlos ne se laisse pas convaincre et trouve pour le moins étrange (480e1 : ἄτοπα) le nouvel usage que Socrate lui propose pour la rhétorique : s'accuser soi-même ainsi que les siens, pour éviter de commettre l'injustice ou s'en guérir par l'expiation (480b–481b). Calliclès, réfuté par Socrate, reconnaît que ce dernier lui semble avoir raison, mais qu'il ne peut être d'accord avec lui :

> Οὐκ οἶδ' ὅντινά τρόπον δοκεῖς εὖ λέγειν, ὦ Σώκρατες· πέπονθα δὲ τὸ τῶν πολλῶν πάθος· οὐ πάνυ σοι πείθομαι.
>
> Il me semble, je ne sais pourquoi, que tu as raison, Socrate ; mais je ressens ce que ressent la foule, je ne suis pas tout à fait convaincu. (*Grg.* 513c)

9 *Grg.* 471e–472c. Sur l'*elenchos,* voir Louis-André. Dorion, « *Elenchos* dialectique et *elenchos* rhétorique dans la défense de Socrate, » *Antiquorum Philosophia* 1 (2007).

Le *pathos* (πέπονθα) éprouvé par Calliclès signale une tension profonde entre l'impression produite par le discours de Socrate (« il me semble que tu as raison ») et l'impossibilité d'accepter l'accord (« je ne suis pas tout à fait convaincu »). C'est que, dans l'âme même de Calliclès, pour reprendre les mots de Socrate en 513c, « C'est l'amour de Dèmos » qui s'oppose à lui et donc à la réussite de l'*elenchos*.[10]

La mise à l'épreuve par l'*elenchos* est donc un révélateur de l'âme humaine et de sa difficulté à accéder à la vérité sous l'empire de la passion, ce qui provoque les ravages que, dans le mythe final, Rhadamante voit dans l'âme du Grand Roi ou de n'importe quel prince :

> Lacérée et ulcérée par les parjures (…), tout y est tordu par le mensonge et la vantardise et rien n'est droit à cause du fait d'avoir été nourri/élevé dans la privation de la vérité (σκολιὰ ὑπὸ ψεύδους καὶ ἀλαζονείας καὶ οὐδὲν εὐθὺ διὰ τὸ ἄνευ ἀληθείας τεθράφθαι). (*Grg.* 524e–525a)

Le philosophe, qui est médecin de l'âme, propose à ses patients un traitement douloureux mais salvateur, pour combattre ces dysfonctionnements, qui atteignent la cité autant que l'âme des citoyens. Toutefois, cette guérison ne peut se faire sans l'accord du patient et cet accord ne se fait pas dans le *Gorgias*.

3 Vivre ou mourir? La philosophie comme choix de vie

Ce que propose le Socrate de Platon est en effet, comme il le déclare lui-même à Calliclès, un choix de vie,[11] mais un choix de vie révolutionnaire et douloureux, aux antipodes de celui de ses interlocuteurs, qui sont soumis aux impulsions contraires de la partie de l'âme où résident les passions.[12] Il repose en effet sur une conception cohérente, stable et ordonnée du monde et de l'âme, dans lequel règne la véritable justice (493b). D'où le refus de Calliclès, pour qui ce monde est « une vie renversée » (481c: ἀνατετραμμένος), qui correspond au monde des morts (493d–494a). Mais pour Socrate, c'est le monde des vérités éternelles et stables qui est le monde des vivants, tandis que le monde des apparences et celui du désir insatiable est le monde des morts.

Nous ne sommes donc pas très loin de l'allégorie de la caverne de la *République* : prisonniers relégués dans l'ombre, nous croyons vivre – en grec,

10 Ὁ δήμου γὰρ ἔρως, ὦ Καλλίκλεις, ἐνὼν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τῇ σῇ ἀντιστατεῖ μοι.
11 *Grg.* 500c : ὅντινα χρὴ τρόπον ζῆν.
12 *Grg.* 493a. Sur les *metabolai* incessantes de l'âme de Calliclès, voir 481d–e et 493a.

« voir la lumière du jour » – alors que nous sommes comme des morts , privés de la véritable lumière de la connaissance, qui prennent pour la vérité ce qui n'est que son reflet, plus ou moins déformé, dans le monde sensible. L'idée est suggérée indirectement par Socrate en 492e, à l'aide de deux vers du *Polyidos* d'Euripide :

> τίς δ' οἶδεν, εἰ τὸ ζῆν μέν ἐστι κατθανεῖν,
> τὸ κατθανεῖν δὲ ζῆν ;
> Qui sait si vivre n'est pas mourir
> Et si mourir n'est pas vivre?[13]

« Peut-être, en réalité, sommes-nous morts, » conclut alors Socrate.[14]

À la fin du dialogue, le mythe eschatologique, qui donne à voir la rétribution des âmes après la mort, est en réalité une représentation de la vie véritable et de l'ordre éternel dans lequel règne la vraie justice.

Mais l'existence de cet ordre éternel, qui garantit la possibilité d'un discours vrai, ne relève pas de l'*elenchos*, elle n'est pas démontrable par le *logos* humain : elle n'est communicable qu'à travers un discours mythique. Calliclès peut ne considérer ce récit que comme un simple « conte de bonne femme » (523a), comme il a refusé le recours au mythe un peu plus haut (493a–494b), mais pour Socrate, il s'agit bel et bien en fait d'un *logos* parce que c'est ce récit qui éclaire et justifie le choix de vie qui est le sien.[15] De ce point de vue, philosopher est d'abord un acte de foi : « Pour ma part, Calliclès, j'ajoute foi à ces récits (ὑπό τε τούτων τῶν λόγων πέπεισμαι) et j'examine comment faire en sorte de présenter au juge une âme aussi saine que possible », déclare Socrate à la fin du dialogue (525d).

La philosophie est à ce prix : parce qu'elle implique un renoncement à la réussite ici et maintenant pour une recherche permanente des vérités éternelles, elle ne peut se manifester et s'imposer, comme la *sophia* des sophistes, qui brille dans les *epideixeis*. C'est pourquoi elle est une *paideia*, mais une *paideia* exigeante, qui s'étend sur l'ensemble de la vie humaine et non, comme le voudrait Calliclès, qui s'arrête lors de l'accession du jeune homme au statut

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13 *Polyidos*, fr. 12 Jouan–Van Looy (= 638 Kannicht). Le texte exact semble avoir été τίς δ' οἶδεν, εἰ τὸ ζῆν μέν ἐστι κατθανεῖν,/ τὸ κατθανεῖν δὲ ζῆν κάτω νομίζεται;

14 493a : Καὶ ἡμεῖς τῷ ὄντι ἴσως τέθναμεν.

15 *Grg.* 523a : Ἄκουε δή, φασι, μάλα καλοῦ λόγου, ὃν σὺ μὲν ἡγήσει μῦθον, ὡς ἐγὼ οἶμαι, ἐγὼ δὲ λόγον ; voir aussi 526d–527a : Ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν, ὦ Καλλίκλει, ὑπό τε τῶν λόγων πέπεισμαι … Τάχα δ' οὖν ταῦτα μῦθός σοι δοκεῖ λέγεσθαι ὥσπερ γραός. Comparer avec le *Ménon*, où l'adhésion à la théorie de la connaissance comme réminiscence (81d–e) est présentée comme un acte de foi, qui permet de chercher la vérité, non une doctrine que l'on peut prouver.

de citoyen. Même si l'on peut considérer le dialogue comme un protreptique à la philosophie, c'est un protreptique d'un nouveau genre, bien différent par exemple de la conception du protreptique sophistique que l'on trouve dans l'*Euthydème*, un protreptique dans lequel le philosophe reconnaît lui-même le danger d'exclusion et de mort que fait courir son choix de vie.

On retrouve ici les éléments qui président à la destinée du héros tragique, dont l'inclusion dans l'idéal communautaire de la cité pose problème. Dans le *Gorgias*, c'est par la réappropriation de ce modèle héroïque tragique, celui de l'*Antiope* d'Euripide, par la représentation à nouveaux frais de l'*agôn* entre Zéthos et Amphion, et par le mythe final que se construit la figure d'un héros nouveau, le héros philosophe, Socrate.[16]

4 De l'*Antiope* d'Euripide au *Gorgias* de Platon : la construction de l'héroïsme philosophique

C'est dans cette perspective que s'explique en effet le recours appuyé à la pièce d'Euripide, aussi bien pour étayer l'argument des genres de vie que pour permettre de comparer les fonctions différentes du spectacle tragique et du « spectacle philosophique », et pour construire un héroïsme proprement philosophique.

Un résumé de la pièce telle qu'on peut la reconstituer d'après l'édition F. Jouan et H. Van Looy dans la Collection des Universités de France des Belles Lettres et surtout de l'*agôn* entre Zéthos et Amphion permettra de comprendre les reprises, mais aussi les écarts platoniciens.[17] Un prologue expliquait la situation : Amphion et Zéthos sont les fils d'Antiope et de Zeus ; ils ont été abandonnés par leur mère, elle-même poursuivie par la vindicte de son père le dieu-fleuve Asopos, roi de Thèbes, puis par celle de son oncle Lycos et de sa femme Dircé. Un berger racontait comment il avait découvert les nouveaux-nés et les avait élevés dans un lieu champêtre entre la Béotie et l'Attique.

Cependant, Amphion et Zéthos avaient grandi. Dans le premier épisode ou à la fin de l'exodos, on voyait Amphion apparaître sur la scène, muni de la lyre

16 C'est ainsi que la figure du philosophe rejoint les figures mythiques des héros injustement condamnés représentés au théâtre au V^e^ siècle. Dans l'*Apologie de Socrate* 41b, le Socrate de Platon s'imagine discutant dans l'Hadès après sa mort avec Palamède « ou tel autre héros du temps passé qui a pu mourir par suite d'une sentence injuste ».

17 D'après une scholie au vers 53 des *Grenouilles* d'Aristophane, la tragédie d'Euripide aurait été représentée un peu avant les Grenouilles, d'où une datation généralement retenue entre 411 et 407 (date présumée du départ d'Euripide à la cour d'Archélaos) ; mais l'analyse métrique suggère une date plus ancienne, entre 427 et 419 (voir Jouan–Van Looy, Euripide, tome VIII, *Fragments 1^ère^ partie : Aigeus-Autolycos,* 220–221).

inventée par le dieu Hermès et chantant un hymne cosmogonique. Son frère survenait alors et lui reprochait violemment son goût pour la « musique ». Le débat (*agôn*) s'élargissait peu à peu. Il devait s'agir de deux *rhèseis* de même longueur : Zéthos y raille son frère de s'adonner entièrement à son art de musicien, négligeant tout le reste. Il lui reproche d'introduire « cette Muse, toute de paresse et d'amour du vin, insoucieuse de l'argent » (fr. 8)[18] et de travestir « cette âme généreuse (φύσιν… γενναίαν) » dont la nature l'a doué « en la façonnant à la manière des femmes (γυναικομίμῳ… μορφώματι) » (fr. 9). On ne peut parler de sagesse (σοφόν) quand un art fait dégénérer même un homme bien doué (εὐφυή) (fr. 10). L'homme qui s'adonne au plaisir de la musique « deviendra un membre inutile de la maison comme de la cité, un homme nul pour ses amis »,[19] car « la nature s'énerve quand on se laisse vaincre par l'attrait du plaisir » (fr. 11). Pour finir, Zéthos incite son frère à renoncer à la musique et à cultiver l'harmonie supérieure des exercices corporels. « Renonce à tes vaines occupations et cultive l'harmonie des exercices corporels (παῦσαι ματᾴζων καὶ πόνων εὐμουσίαν/ ἄσκει) », ajoute-t-il. « Laisse à d'autres ces ingénieux raffinements (τὰ κόμψα… σοφίσματα) qui te conduiront à habiter une maison vide (κενοῖσιν… δόμοις) » (fr. 12). Amphion répond aux accusations : il préfère l'étude (μελέτη) à la richesse (fr. 14), parce que les richesses sont éphémères (fr. 15) et que l'homme riche, qui reste insensible à la beauté, n'est que le gardien de ses trésors (fr. 16). Puisque le bonheur est si fragile et si difficile à atteindre pour les hommes, pourquoi ne pas préférer le plaisir à la souffrance (fr. 17–18)? « Bien fou est celui qui s'occupe de mille choses (ὅστις… πράσσει πολλά) quand il peut vivre agréablement dans le loisir (παρὸν ζῆν ἡδέως ἀπράγμονα) » (fr. 19), alors que « l'homme tranquille (ἥσυχος) est un ami sûr pour ses amis et le meilleur citoyen pour la cité (ἀσφαλὴς φίλος/ πόλει τ' ἄριστος) » (fr. 20). La culture et l'intelligence l'emportent également sur la vigueur physique (fr. 21), et une tête bien faite l'emporte sur la richesse des bras, qui perd son utilité quand on perd ses richesses (fr. 22–23). Et Amphion de conclure :

> Ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν ᾄδοιμι καὶ λέγοιμί τι
> σοφόν, ταράσσων μηδὲν ὧν πόλις νοσεῖ.
> Puissé-je donc chanter et dire une parole sage
> sans rien remuer des maux de la cité. (fr. 24)

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18 Fr. 8 Jouan–Van Looy (= 183 Kannicht) : κακῶν κατάρχεις τήνδε τὴν μοῦσαν εἰσάγων/ ἀργόν, φίλοινον, χρημάτων ἀτημελῆ.

19 Fr. 11 Jouan–Van Looy (= 187 Kannicht), v. 4–5 : ἀργὸς μὲν οἴκοις καὶ πόλει γενήσεται,/φίλοισι δ' οὐδείς.

Il est probable que l'un des deux cédait, puisque tous les deux collaborent ensuite. Amphion modifiait à la fin du débat sa position et un compromis s'établissait. Leur mère arrivait ensuite, poursuivie par Lycos et Dircé et se faisait reconnaître d'eux non sans difficulté. Ils tuaient alors Dircé, qui l'avait capturée, et menaçaient de mort Lycos. L'intervention finale d'Hermès comme *deus ex machina* sauvait Lycos de la mort et faisait des jumeaux les rois de Thèbes. Amphion, en particulier, par sa musique, devait célébrer les dieux par ses chants pour charmer pierres et troncs qui s'assembleraient ainsi pour former un rempart autour de la cité (fr. 42, v. 90–94).[20]

Dans l'*agôn* du *Gorgias*, Calliclès s'attribue explicitement en 485e le rôle de Zéthos. Il fait aussi des allusions répétées à la pièce dans son argumentation, en citant directement à quatre reprises des passages de la *rhèsis* (484e, 485e–486a, 486b, 486c). En 485e–486a, il reprend les propos de Zéthos reprochant à son frère de négliger ce dont il devrait s'occuper (le bien commun), en « imposant à [son] naturel généreux (φύσιν… γενναίαν) un déguisement puéril (μειρακιώδει τινὶ… μορφώματι) »,[21] ce qui le rend incapable de l'emporter dans le maniement du persuasif et du vraisemblable. En 486b–c, il insiste en critiquant la conception socratique de la *sophia* à travers plusieurs reprises d'Euripide :

> Comment serait-ce de la sagesse (σοφόν), Socrate, que de « prendre un homme bien doué et de le rendre pire », hors d'état de se défendre et de se sauver des plus grands périls soit lui-même soit tout autre (…). Crois-moi, mon cher, « laisse-là tes réfutations (παῦσαι δ' ἐλέγχων);[22] cultive des exercices chers aux Muses (πραγμάτων εὐμουσίαν) qui puissent te donner une réputation d'homme sensé ; abandonne à d'autres tous ces ingénieux raffinements (τὰ κομψὰ ταῦτα), qu'on ne sait si l'on doit appeler des folies ou des sottises (εἴτε ληρήματα … εἴτε φλυαρίας), et qui te conduiront à habiter une maison vide (ἐξ ὧν κενοῖσιν ἐγκατοικήσεις δόμοις)».[23]

20 Pour le texte et sa reconstitution, voir Jouan–Van Looy, Euripide, *Fragments*, 226–237 et Paul Demont, *La cité grecque archaïque et classique et l'idéal de tranquillité* (Paris : Les Belles Lettres, 1990), 168–174.

21 Voir *Antiope*, fr. 9. On trouvera une analyse détaillée de la manière dont Platon cite et déforme Euripide dans M. de los Llanos Martínez Bermejo, « La citas de Eurípides en el Gorgias de Platóne, » *Journal of Classical Philology* 17 (2013).

22 Voir fr. 9, v. 1 Jouan-Van Looy. Le terme ἐλέγχων est une modification du texte original, qui serait soit παῦσαι μελῳδῶν selon Nauck, soit, si l'on adopte la scholie en marge du ms T du *Gorgias*, παῦσαι ματαιάζων [ou ματᾴζων = cesse tes vaines occupations].

23 Fr. 9, v. 4–5, Jouan–Van Looy. Voir la réponse sur ce point de Socrate en 514a sq. et 520e.

Le discours de Zéthos permet donc à Calliclès de présenter la *sophia* socratique comme une *sophia* sans brillant (484e), sans intérêt pour la cité et pour celui qui la détient, parce qu'elle ne lui permet pas d'acquérir des biens et de se défendre, ainsi que les siens. Ses paroles n'ont donc aucun intérêt véritable et aucune portée politique. C'est à ces accusations que Socrate va répondre point par point d'abord en réfutant les positions de Calliclès, mais surtout, dans un deuxième temps (à partir de 506c), en donnant – même si son adversaire ne l'écoute plus – à Calliclès « la tirade d'Amphion en échange de celle de Zéthos »,[24] c'est-à-dire en montrant que la vie philosophique est bien au contraire la vie la plus utile pour la cité, mais aussi pour les amis. Le retournement est souligné explicitement en 508b–c, où l'on revient sur la question du sérieux des affirmations de Socrate, contestées par Calliclès au début de son intervention, et s'achève dans le mythe eschatologique final, où l'âme du philosophe est envoyée par Rhadamante dans les îles des Bienheureux (525c).

5 De l'héroïsme tragique à l'héroïsme philosophique

Toutefois, malgré les reprises textuelles et structurelles, les perspectives ne sont pas les mêmes[25] et Platon se démarque clairement de son hypotexte tragique. Alors que l'Amphion d'Euripide propose un modèle de poésie (musique) active qui résulte d'un compromis entre les positions des deux frères (vie active et vie contemplative), l'Amphion platonicien demeure seul en scène, bâtissant une cité radicalement différente de la cité d'Athènes. Là où Amphion bâtit sans opposition les murailles de tous pour le bien commun, Socrate risque sa vie pour avoir affirmé la "singularité" du choix de vie philosophique. C'est aussi qu'il se distingue d'Amphion dans sa conception de la musique, comme il le dit très explicitement à Calliclès au début de l'entretien :

> J'estime pour ma part, mon cher, que mieux vaudrait que ma lyre soit dissonante et mal accordée (ἔγωγε οἶμαι … καὶ τὴν λύραν μοι κρεῖττον εἶναι ἀναρμοστεῖν τε καὶ διαφωνεῖν), ainsi que le choeur que je pourrais diriger, et que tout le monde se trouve en désaccord avec moi et me contredise (μὴ ὁμολογεῖν ἀλλ' ἐναντία λέγειν), que d'être discordant (ἀσύμφωνον) avec moi-même et de me contredire (ἐναντία λέγειν). (*Grg.* 482b–c)

24 *Grg.* 506b : Ἀμφίωνος … ῥῆσιν ἀντὶ τῆς τοῦ Ζήθου.

25 Dodds, *Plato, Gorgias*, 275.

La lyre, c'est bien ici la lyre d'Amphion – d'où la réponse de Calliclès, qui va opposer à cette déclaration les propos de Zéthos –, mais l'usage qu'en fait le personnage de Socrate s'oppose à celui du personnage d'Euripide : l'harmonie et la concorde, c'est d'abord en soi qu'il faut les faire, c'est-à-dire dans son âme et ses discours. Calliclès, lui, contrairement à Socrate, court le risque du manque d'harmonie : en voulant complaire à Démos et en épousant ses opinions changeantes,[26] en essayant de complaire à la multitude, il sera toujours en dissonance (διαφωνήσει) avec lui-même.[27] La lyre dissonante et le chœur mal réglé, le désaccord avec les interlocuteurs-spectateurs, sont bien une première prise de distance et une critique par rapport au modèle tragique, celui de la lyre d'Amphion.

Ce désaccord sera précisé à la fin de la première partie du dialogue avec Calliclès. La tragédie, cette « merveilleuse forme de poésie »,[28] est présentée comme une « forme de discours au peuple (δημηγορία τις) », qui cherche à le flatter, de sorte que « les poètes <tragiques> se livrent à une activité d'orateurs (ῥητορεύειν) dans les théâtres ». Elle est donc « une forme de rhétorique (ῥητορικήν τινα) à l'usage d'une assemblée où se pressent pêle-mêle, à côté des hommes, les enfants et les femmes, et les esclaves et les hommes libres » (502d). Tout comme la rhétorique gorgianique, qui est l'imitation de l'art véritable, celui de la justice, la tragédie telle qu'elle est conçue et pratiquée à Athènes ne peut qu'être considérée comme une simple flatterie (κολακική), qui ne repose pas sur la connaissance de son objet, et non comme un art. Elle s'adresse à la majorité, dont elle recherche les suffrages, et non à l'âme.

Toutefois, dans le *Gorgias*, la rhétorique n'est pas entièrement disqualifiée. À l'issue de l'entretien avec Pôlos, Socrate avait proposé d'en faire un autre usage, contre soi-même et les siens, pour éviter de commettre l'injustice et de blesser son âme (480a–481b). Cette idée est réaffirmée à la fin de la première partie de l'*agôn* avec Calliclès. « L'orateur selon l'art et selon le bien (ὁ ῥήτωρ ἐκεῖνος, ὁ τεχνικός τε καὶ ἀγαθός) aura pour unique objet de faire naître dans l'âme de ses concitoyens la justice », proclame Socrate.[29] La rhétorique socratique n'a donc pas pour fin de défendre Socrate et elle ne peut lui éviter la mort, sauf si ses accusateurs acceptent de changer radicalement de vie. De la même façon, la tragédie, autre forme de rhétorique, peut avoir un usage philosophique.[30]

26 Voir 481e et 482b.

27 482b : διαφωνήσει ἐν ἅπαντι τῷ βίῳ.

28 502b : ἡ σεμνὴ αὕτη καὶ θαυμαστὴ, ἡ τῆς τραγῳδίας ποίησις.

29 *Grg*. 504d–e.

30 Voir sur ce point les remarques très justes de Trivigno, « Paratragedy in Plato's Gorgias, » 99–100.

Car Socrate-Amphion ne cherche pas les suffrages de la majorité, mais prend le risque mortel de la discordance pour préserver la cohérence de son choix de vie. La nouveauté réside ici dans le changement de destinataire : c'est à l'âme humaine qu'elle s'adresse désormais, non au *démos* athénien.

En ce sens, le mythe eschatologique final ne joue pas réellement le rôle de *deus ex machina* dévolu à Hermès dans la pièce d'Euripide, intervenant pour calmer la fureur meurtrière des deux frères contre Lycos et annoncer la construction des murailles de Thèbes. Socrate-Amphion, à travers le jugement des âmes dans l'Hadès, bâtit devant nos yeux un lieu où règne la justice véritable. Cependant ses interlocuteurs directs dans le dialogue, tout comme la foule qui assiste à l'entretien après avoir écouté l'*eipideixis* de Gorgias (458c), semblent demeurer muets (et aveugles) devant ce spectacle. Le mythe ne permet donc pas la résolution du conflit, du moins à l'issue du dialogue. Il met en place une fin alternative, dans laquelle le philosophe mort fait partie des vivants, où c'est Calliclès vivant qui bascule – sans le savoir – dans la mort, illustrant la formule du *Polyidos* déjà citée : « Qui sait si vivre n'est pas mourir et si mourir n'est pas vivre? »

Là aussi la citation fait sens. Dans la pièce d'Euripide, Polyidos était un devin qui réussissait à échapper à la mort en ramenant à la vie Glaucos, le jeune fils de Minos, alors que ce dernier l'avait emmuré vivant dans le caveau avec le cadavre. Dans le *Gorgias*, ce n'est pas le devin qui revient à la vie. C'est lui qui est vivant et Minos qui est mort. Deux interprétations de la vie et de la politique s'opposent, qui demeurent inconciliables. Seul le lecteur du dialogue peut trancher en acceptant l'une ou l'autre. C'est ainsi que Socrate incarne un nouveau modèle d'héroïsme, reposant cette fois sur la vérité et non sur le désir de séduire, et s'adressant à l'âme : l'héroïsme philosophique.[31]

Se joue donc dans le *Gorgias* un drame nouveau, avec un héros nouveau, sur une scène nouvelle, celle du dialogue philosophique. La fin de l'œuvre permet en effet de démarquer héroïsme tragique et héroïsme philosophique. Socrate reste seul et il accepte la mort pour être fidèle à sa conception de la justice et donc à lui-même. Et cette mort, c'est aussi la (vraie) vie et le triomphe de la philosophie, d'où le mythe final, qui est le premier des grands mythes eschatologiques platoniciens et qui donne le dernier mot à la justice véritable, celle qui envoie son héros dans les îles des Bienheureux,[32] par opposition à la justice d'Athènes, qui le met à mort. Mais, en entrant dans l'Hadès, ce n'est plus

31 On songe bien sûr aux législateurs des *Lois* VII 817a–b, répondant aux poètes tragiques qui leur demandent le droit d'entrer dans leur cité qu'ils sont eux-mêmes auteurs de la « tragédie la plus belle et la meilleure possible ».

32 Voir aussi *Phédon* 115d.

seulement l'individu-Socrate, c'est désormais « l'âme ayant vécu saintement dans le commerce de la vérité, âme d'un simple citoyen (ἀνδρὸς ἰδιώτου) ou de tout autre, mais le plus souvent … âme d'un philosophe (φιλοσόφου), qui ne s'est occupé que de son office propre et ne s'est pas dispersé dans une agitation stérile durant sa vie (τὰ αὑτοῦ πράξαντος καὶ οὐ πολυπραγμονήσαντος) » qui atteint l'immortalité (*Grg.* 526c). On peut dire que, dans le *Gorgias*, c'est la mort annoncée de Socrate qui fait naître le philosophe, devenant ainsi le mythe fondateur de la philosophie.[33]

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33 Voir sur ce point les belles analyses de R. Hunter, *Plato and the Traditions of Ancient Literature. The Silent Stream* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press), 118–120.

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CHAPTER 10

Judicial Reform and the Meaning of the Eschatological Myth in the *Gorgias*

Veronika Konrádová

Abstract

The paper focusses on the status and function of the eschatological myth in the *Gorgias.* The proposed analysis assumes that the narrative structure of the myth corresponds to the argumentation developed during the preceding discussion and that its characteristic tone resonates with the overall philosophic concern expressed in the discursive parts of the dialogue. On this ground, the paper characterises the mythical account as an attempt to visualise the inner dynamics of the soul. Given the intrinsic value of virtue (and the corresponding badness of vice), the paper proposes that the Platonic image is not restricted to the afterlife experience of the soul but is primarily related to the here-and-now perspective and represents an intensification of the human condition during this life. Here, the paper deals critically with the proposal that the myth conveys the belief that justice "pays in the end." Instead of the consequentialist vision of a post-mortem destiny punishing past wrongdoing, the proposed interpretation emphasises that the story reveals an actual concern in our present situation. In this context, the paper addresses the topic of the soul's judgment and confronts the image of judicial reform depicted in the myth with the motif of judgment and punishment widely discussed in the previous debate. Here, the psychological and therapeutic dimension of penalty is stressed. Along with this, the paper accentuates the topic of examination and instruction through speech and confronts Socratic dialogical practice with methods of contemporary rhetoric.

Keywords

Plato – myth – *Gorgias* – soul – judgment – punishment – rhetoric.

1 Introduction

The eschatological myth that concludes the *Gorgias* (523a–527e) belongs to a broad and varied spectrum of narratives that frequently enter Plato's writing. In this sense, it is one of those challenging passages calling for adequate contextual comprehension. The present contribution raises the question of the status and function of the final myth within the argumentative structure of the dialogue. Specifically, it focusses on the topic of the soul's judgment and confronts the image of judicial reform depicted in the myth with the motif of judgment and punishment widely discussed in the previous debate. In this context, it also reflects the role of mythical imagination in Plato's literary strategies and examines how philosophical communication can work through narrative structures and poetic imagery.

2 Mythic Imagery in Plato

Before addressing the topic indicated in the title, an introductory note should be devoted to the very presence of the mythical element in Plato's writing. Regarding research in this area, Julia Annas previously pointed out a weak philosophical interest and reluctance to read the myths as a meaningful part of Plato's thought. According to her observations, the approach to the myths oscillated between considering them as attempts to grasp profound truths otherwise inaccessible to reason or refreshment in the course of the discussion and momentary abandonment of strict argumentation.[1] In any case, scholars have questioned whether the myths can be regarded as serious parts of the arguments in which they are presented.[2] However, there were voices attesting a fundamental role of myths in Plato's thinking.[3] In recent years, a

1 Julia Annas, "Plato's Myths of Judgement," *Phronesis* 27,1–2 (1982): 119; see also Álvaro Vallejo, "Myth and Rhetoric in the *Gorgias*," in *Gorgias – Menon. Selected Papers from the Seventh Symposium Platonicum*, ed. Michael Erler and Luc Brisson (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2007), 138: "The reception of Platonic thought in the history of philosophy has conferred myths with a diverse lot, from (a) those who sought to do away with it, stating, as Hegel did, that myths can be dismissed as alien to the true philosophy of Plato, to (b) those who have overvalued it, considering myths to be an exceptional path to gain access to certain problems that cannot be addressed through logos, thereby constituting the highest expression of Platonic metaphysics."

2 See for example Radcliffe G. Edmonds III, *Myths of the Underworld Journey*: *Plato, Aristophanes, and the 'Orphic' Gold Tablets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 162 ff.

3 Luc Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker* (Chicago – London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998); Brisson, "I Miti nel' Etica di Platone," in *Plato Ethicus. La filosofia è vita*, ed. Maurizio Migliori and Linda M. Napolitano Valditara (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2008).

comprehensive monograph, *Plato and Myth*, testified to a new wave of interest in this somewhat underestimated aspect of Plato's writing, and editors of the volume declared the reflection on the uses and the role of myth in Platonic thought as essential for understanding Plato's conception of philosophy as well as understanding the more complex relationship between philosophy and mythopoetic tradition.[4]

The use of mythic imagery is one of the specific strategies of Plato's literary communication drawing on and, at the same time, critically responding to predominant literary genres of contemporary Greek culture. With Gerard Naddaf, we can also label these genres as "oral literature," recognising that in the Greek oral tradition, myths were communicated in the form of poetry.[5] Plato interacts intensively with this cultural practice.[6] His authorial strategy typically involves the selective use of traditional motifs and their transformation into a new context determined by his philosophical intention. Adopting traditional elements permits Plato to convey complex ideas effectively in a terse form. Further, in the course of the dialogue, a vivid and self-contained image can serve as a shortcut based on an associative mode of thought; in this way, culturally comprehensible hints can point to familiar images and sets of shared beliefs. It means that the names of traditional figures and places can resonate through the mind of a listener or a reader and evoke a range of relevant associations. For example, in setting the scene in the myth of the *Gorgias*, Plato relies on various traditional motifs with an eschatological touch (the Isles of the Blessed, the judgment after death), and, by naming Aeacus or Minos in this context, he easily evokes complex associations of just behaviour and judging disputes, which fits within both the framework of cultural expectation of his audience and the overall design of the dialogue. Nevertheless, Plato restructures these associations to a considerable degree and fills them with new meaning.[7] Moreover, reshaping of the traditional motifs permits Plato to redefine the current system of values and shift cultural paradigms.

4 Catherine Collobert, Pierre Destrée, and Francisco J. Gonzalez, eds. *Plato and Myth. Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myths* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

5 Gerard Naddaf, "Introduction," in Luc Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker* (Chicago – London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), x–xi.

6 Multiple facets of Plato's engagement with the culturally powerful heritage of Greek poetic tradition are examined by Stephen Halliwell, "The subjection of *Muthos* to *Logos*: Plato's Citations of the Poets," *Classical Quarterly* 50,1 (2000)." A comprehensive overview is offered by Pierre Destrée and Fritz-Gregor Herrmann, eds., *Plato and the Poets* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

7 See Radcliffe G. Edmonds III, "Whip Scars on the Naked Soul: Myth and *Elenchos* in Plato's *Gorgias*," in *Plato and Myth. Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myths*, eds. Catherine

Such an adaptation and appropriation of cultural material provides new possibilities in pursuing philosophical concerns. Primarily, the transposition of mythical imagery into a philosophical set of ideas is a powerful device to visualise the invisible. As Catherine Collobert puts it, "While reading a Platonic myth, we come to grips with a specific issue, experiencing a way of looking at the issue and having a tangible and visible grasp of what is by nature invisible and intangible."[8] A significant issue that arises in this way before our eyes in many of Plato's texts is the life and dispositions of the soul. The invisible soul is made visible not only through the famous images revealing its structure and inner dynamics in the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus*[9] but also through the eschatological narrations that end the *Republic*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Gorgias*. The latter will be the subject of my attention in the following analysis.

3 The Judicial Reform in the *Gorgias*

The concluding myth in the *Gorgias* has been subject to reservations similar to those raised by scholars against Platonic myths as a whole.[10] The scene of the final judgment of souls and the image of horrific punishment of the wicked has been interpreted as a threat of hell-fire designed to convince the stubborn

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Collobert, Pierre Destrée, and Francisco J. Gonzalez (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 183. ("The support of the most authoritative voice in the tradition, whose tellings are familiar to nearly all of Plato's intended audience, shows that Plato's ideas fit within the framework of Greek culture, making them more acceptable and persuasive to his audience even as he engages in shifting their values and ideals.")

8 Catherine Collobert, "The Platonic Art of Myth-Making: Myth as Informative *Phantasma*," in *Plato and Myth. Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myths*, eds. Catherine Collobert, Pierre Destrée, and Francisco J. Gonzalez (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 102. The same can be stated about Plato's famous images of the soul in the *Phaedrus* and in *Republic* IX. Characterizing these philosophical images as "informative *phantasmata*", Catherine Collobert makes this distinction: "a *doxastic phantasma* is an image of a sensible object, which is shaped out of a belief about what the object is, that is, an appearance, while an informative *phantasma* is an image of an *intelligible* object that is shaped out of knowledge about what the object is, that is, a sketch of the truth". Collobert, "The Platonic Art," 102.

9 Plato, *Resp.* IX 588b–589b, *Phdr.* 246a–d.

10 The problem of using "non-rational appeals and extra-logical rhetorical devices" in Plato's dialogues is addressed by Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicolas D. Smith, "The Myth of the Afterlife in Plato's *Gorgias*," in *Gorgias – Menon. Selected Papers from the Seventh Symposium Platonicum*, eds. Michael Erler and Luc Brisson (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2007).

Callicles that justice "pays in the end."[11] The myth has thus been seen as a failure of strict argumentation and withdrawal from strictly philosophical practice.[12] Further, if the dialogue so decisively promotes the value of a just life, suggesting that virtue is its own reward, it seemed strange that the final encouragement to justice would resort to such a consequentialist perspective and appeal to some system of compensation and splendid rewards in the hereafter.[13]

Nevertheless, introducing the mythical account, Socrates strongly asserts that for him, the myth is not fanciful but true evidence of the intrinsic value of virtue and equally the inherent badness of vice: "Give ear then—as they put it—to a very fine account. You'll think that it's a mere tale, I believe, although I think it's an account, for what I'm about to say I will tell you as true".[14] He explicitly presents the myth as a support of the claims that virtue inherently benefits us and badness inherently harms us. Let us take this assertion seriously.[15] In the following, I suppose that the myth is designed to amplify the arguments of the discussion and not to present ideas ungraspable by reason nor to supplement supposedly deficient arguments with threats of punishments or promises of rewards in the hereafter. My analysis is based on the assumption that the narrative structure of the myth corresponds to the previous argumentation developed in the course of the dialogue and that its characteristic tone is consistent with the overall philosophic concern expressed in the discursive parts of the Platonic text.

The link between the argumentative and the narrative part of the dialogue is the motif of judgment and is closely connected with the problem of corrective

11 Julia Annas, "Plato's Myths of Judgement," *Phronesis* 27,1–2 (1982): 125. ("The myth, then, is giving us a consequentialist reason to be just. Whether we take it as really threatening future punishment for wrongdoing, or demythologize the message as the claim that being wicked brings the punishment of a scarred and deformed soul now, its message is still that justice "pays in the end", on a deeper level than we can now see. The final judgement myth is a myth of moral optimism; being good will benefit you, if not now then 'in the end', in some more profound way than is recognized by Athenian judges.")

12 Edmonds III, "Whip Scars," 165.

13 Daniel C. Russell, "Misunderstanding the Myth in the *Gorgias*," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 39 (2001): 557.

14 Plato, *Grg.* 523a: ἄκουε δή, φασί, μάλα καλοῦ λόγου, ὃν σὺ μὲν ἡγήσῃ μῦθον, ὡς ἐγὼ οἶμαι, ἐγὼ δὲ λόγον· ὡς ἀληθῆ γὰρ ὄντα σοι λέξω ἃ μέλλω λέγειν. Translations from the *Gorgias* are by Donald J. Zeyl.

15 We face a similar situation in the *Republic* where Socrates criticizes poetic praise of external benefits of justice (*Resp.* II 362e–363e) and then tells the final myth about punishments and rewards (*Resp.* X 614a *ad finem*). We can either complain about Plato's apparent inconsistency (unexpected in the author who is so concerned about consistency in thought and speech) or assume that there is no talk about post-mortem compensation.

treatment. This topic is worked out within a fundamental debate on whether it is better to be punished for injustice or to escape punishment. The discussion draws attention to the process of judgment itself and the subsequent form and effects of due correction.

In the concluding myth, Plato sets this topic into the context of post-mortem destiny and elaborates a vivid scene of judgment of a person's whole life. It is centred around a picture of judicial reform and distinguishes the eras of the mythical reign of Cronus and Zeus. The impulse to the reform lies in recognising the defects of the former system of judgment responsible for the inadequate distribution of the deceased either to the Isles of the Blessed or to Tartarus:

> The cases are being badly decided at this time because those being judged are judged fully dressed. They're being judged while they're still alive. Many […] whose souls are wicked are dressed in handsome bodies, good stock and wealth, and when the judgment takes place they have many witnesses appear to testify that they have lived just lives. Now the judges are awestruck by these things and pass judgment at a time when they themselves are fully dressed, too, having put their eyes and ears and their whole bodies up as screens in front of their souls. All these things, their own clothing and that of those being judged, have proved to be obstructive to them." (*Grg.* 523c–d)

The core of the reform depicted in the myth lies in these radical changes made by Zeus:

> What we must do first […] is to stop them from knowing their death ahead of time. Now they do have that knowledge […] Next, they must be judged when they're stripped naked of all these things, for they should be judged when they're dead. The judge, too, should be naked, and dead, and with only his soul he should study only the soul of each person immediately upon his death, when he's isolated from all his kinsmen and has left behind on earth all that adornment, so that the judgment may be a just one. (*Grg.* 523d–e)

Thus, Aeacus, Minos and Rhadamanthus are appointed judges over human deeds; they are expected to thoroughly examine the souls of the deceased. At first sight, by this narrative, the problem of judgment and punishment is transferred to the afterlife. However, there are indications that the dialogue adopts

a double perspective by creating a parallel between the afterlife judgment and the contemporary situation of the interlocutors:

> Those who are benefited, who are made to pay their due by gods *and men*, are the ones whose errors are curable; even so, their benefit comes to them, *both here* and in Hades, by way of pain and suffering, for there is no other possible way to get rid of injustice. (*Grg.* 525b)[16]

Here, the punishment by gods in the nether world parallels the punishment by men in this world. An earlier quote from Euripides has already prepared this dual reference to a this-world and the-other-world perspective: "But who knows whether being alive is being dead, and being dead being alive?" (492e10–11). These hints suggest that the image of the afterlife is not limited to life after death but is decisively related to the human condition during this life.

Moreover, if the text is read through the lens of the interlocutors' current situation, it can be seen that the topic of judgment and punishment operates on two levels. It repeatedly plays with a parallel between body and soul, which, at the same time, evokes a more general relationship between exteriority and interiority. Furthermore, elaboration of this parallelism is closely related to the principal metaphor governing the overall tone of the whole dialogue, which is a medical metaphor of diagnosis and healing.

4 Therapy of the Soul

Socrates explicitly introduces the medical metaphor in his debate with Polus on whether it is better to suffer or to commit injustice and whether it is better to be punished or to escape punishment. The effect of the metaphor lies in an elaborate analogy between soul and body – namely between the constitutive and restorative arts responsible for a good condition of the soul and the body, respectively. Socrates gradually develops an analogy between legislation and justice on the one side and gymnastics and medicine on the other. After contrasting these arts with their defective and pandering counterparts, he complements the analogy by establishing a similar relationship between sophistry and rhetoric operating on the plane of the soul and cosmetics and cookery working on the plane of the body. Translated into the language of geometric

16 εἰσὶν δὲ οἱ μὲν ὠφελούμενοί τε καὶ δίκην διδόντες ὑπὸ θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνθρώπων οὗτοι οἳ ἂν ἰάσιμα ἁμαρτήματα ἁμάρτωσιν: ὅμως δὲ δι᾽ ἀλγηδόνων καὶ ὀδυνῶν γίγνεται αὐτοῖς ἡ ὠφελία καὶ ἐνθάδε καὶ ἐν Ἅιδου: οὐ γὰρ οἷόν τε ἄλλως ἀδικίας ἀπαλλάττεσθαι.

relations: "what cosmetics is to gymnastics, sophistry is to legislation, and what pastry baking is to medicine, oratory is to justice" (465c).

It can be seen that the relevance of medical treatment and its role in this complex scheme has been partly signalled already in the previous conversation containing repeated allusions to medicine and medical care.[17] Moreover, a series of these subtle hints evoking the topic of a remedy can be traced back to the opening passage of the dialogue. Meanwhile, initial anticipation of the vital role of healing can be detected in the opening exchange between Socrates, Callicles and Chaerephon. Responding to Callicles, Socrates says, "Did we 'arrive when the feast was over,' as the saying goes?" (447a). The feast here implies Gorgias' splendid rhetorical performance. To explain his late arrival, Socrates blames Chaerephon, and Chaerephon promises a cure in return: "That's no problem, Socrates. I'll make up for it, too (ἐγὼ γὰρ καὶ ἰάσομαι, 447b1)." At the verbal level, these proleptic hints evoke the contrast between mastery of rhetorical skills, which resembles a banquet satisfying the public through sophisticated culinary skills and proper dietary procedures of real medical art corresponding to Socratic dialogical practice.[18] However, the full meaning of the therapeutic process will be apparent only through further elaboration, representing Socrates as a physician of the soul.[19]

The intense effort to evoke the motif of healing, i.e., restoring a healthy state, reveals that this is one of the focal points of the dialogue. It is particularly important if we consider the analogy between possible conditions of soul and body together with an internalist conception of injustice, conceived as a bad condition of the soul (477b). Like the disease of the body, the wickedness of the soul needs proper diagnosis and corrective treatment. This brings us back to the problem of judgment. The dialogue describes this process both in its defective and its due form. In doing so, it draws attention to the risks of concealment, threatening to obscure and distort the actual state of the matter under consideration.

The final myth demonstrates this point in a complex form. As David Sedley and others after him have suggested, the distinction between judgment before and judgment after Zeus' reform corresponds to the difference between two

17 See *Grg.* 448b, 456b, 459a–b, 464d–e; and also 475e, 478a, 479a, 521e.

18 The choice of cookery as a counterpart to medicine is understandable given the nature of ancient medicine, which largely uses dietary practices and diet regimen.

19 The relevance of opening scenes in Platonic dialogues is carefully analyzed by Myles Burnyeat, "First Words. A Valedictory Lecture," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 43 (1997). The opening scene of the *Gorgias* is a subject of James Doyle, "On the First Eight Lines of Plato's *Gorgias*," *The Classical Quarterly* 56,2 (2006). However, Doyle disregards Charmides' verbal cue to curing.

systems of judging. These are associated with two types of speech practice of contemporary Athens elaborated on earlier in the dialogue: the law-court rhetoric on the one side and Socratic dialogical method on the other.[20]

The myth concisely represents the characteristics of both types of speech: like judging under Cronus, the contemporary law-court rhetoric manifests itself in establishing the most positive outer appearance of the defendant, and relies on witnesses and elaborate speeches and appeals to the masses. Furthermore, by creating a good impression, it promises to protect the defendant against impending punishment. This practice corresponds to the contemporary way of conducting a lawsuit.[21] Moreover, the court's decision was not based on material evidence but consisted primarily of the assessment of the character of both opponents. Each side, therefore, tried to utter a court speech presenting its party as a blameless and orderly citizen. The role of witnesses was essential. However, they were not expected to provide impartial testimony but to strengthen the positive image of the party involved. Their task was primarily to confirm the status and good reputation of the litigant within the social networks of his relatives and friends.

Contrary to this law-court practice, the Socratic dialogical method offers different procedures similar to the face-to-face examination of mythical judges under Zeus. Let us remember that in the absence of factual evidence, the search for the truth during the decision-making process in the Athenian court relied on "looking at a man's nature and the life he leads" (εἰς ἀνδρὸς φύσιν σκοπῶν δίαιτάν θ᾽ ἥντιν᾽ ἡμερεύεται).[22] Socrates maintains the goal to examine a person's way of life (just as the aim of the reformed judgment in the myth remains the assessment of human life) but completely transforms the methods of how to achieve it effectively. The Socratic examination avoids the risks of concealment and strips the person examined of all the glitter of external impression. Thus, what remains hidden behind high self-esteem and public reputation becomes apparent in a similar way as the unjust deeds are made visible as scars and deformities of the naked soul in front of the mythical judges. In the myth, the invisible is presented in graphic form through the vivid image of the

20 David Sedley, "Myth, Punishment and Politics in the *Gorgias*," in *Plato's Myths*, ed. Catalin Partenie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 58: "[…] the regime of Zeus, with its advances over the Cronus regime, symbolizes a method of examining and improving souls which we are being asked to recognize as superior to the current Athenian political and judicial system. And that method is, in spirit, both Socratic and dialectical." See Edmonds III, "Whip Scars," 170 ff.; Christopher Rowe, "The Status of the Myth of the *Gorgias*, or: Taking Plato Seriously," in *Plato and Myth*, 189 ff.

21 Edmonds III, "Whip Scars," 168–169.

22 Aeschines, *Contra Timarch*, 152.

soul displaying her qualities through her visible condition and fitness.[23] The Socratic dialogical practice corresponds to this model. It appeals to individuals and calls only the interlocutor himself as a witness. Now what is significant is not how one appears in the eyes of others but who one really is.[24] Therefore, the Socratic method disregards status, reputation and external qualities and only asks how consistent are the attitudes and opinions of the person under examination. Like the reformed practice in the myth, it focusses solely on the inspection of the soul itself.

Confronting these two types of speech – Athenian forensic rhetoric and Socratic elenctic dialogue – Plato contrasts two kinds of evidence: one focused on the outer impression and consensus of the majority and the other centred on the personal character and inner coherence. The latter is associated with the Socratic dialogical method, and Socrates himself repeatedly points out this kind of witness in discussion with his partners.[25]

Along with the transformation of the mechanism of judgment, the concept of punishment is also changing. Contrary to the conviction of exponents of clever law-court rhetoric that it is desirable to avoid being punished, Socrates stresses that punishment is a necessary therapeutic agent.[26] Just as medical treatment positively affects the body, the penalty positively affects the corrupted soul. Therefore, it would be foolish to try to escape punishment like a child who avoids the doctor for fear of painful treatment.[27]

Let us consider how Socratic questioning combines the element of diagnosis with that of healing. The effect of Socratic elenchos lies precisely in determining crooked opinions leading to errors in one's life and in confronting the examined person with the contradictions into which he or she falls. At the same time, the exposure to the inconsistencies in one's speech and life in front of an audience is embarrassing for the loser. In Greek competitive culture, public defeat is usually accompanied by a feeling of shame.[28] In the Socratic

23 Here, the aesthetic appearance, worthy of a free citizen, is at the same time a sign of moral quality, both of which fall within the semantic field of *kalos*.

24 The difference between appearance and truth, understood as a difference between social mask and personal identity, is stressed by Alessandra Fussi, "The Myth of the Last Judgment in the *Gorgias*," *The Review of Metaphysics* 54 (2001).

25 *Grg.* 458a–b, 471e–472c, 473d, 473e–474b, 506a.

26 The positive impact of punishment is firmly stated in *Grg.* 472e, 473b, 476a, 478e–479d.

27 See *Grg.* 479b–c.

28 Radcliffe Edmonds III remarks: "The Attic ὁ ἔλεγχος is generally used in the specific sense of a legal or rhetorical refutation, in contrast to the broader epic sense of shame, but the sense of failing a test or contest always underlies this refutation. To lose a contest or to fail a test, particularly in a public arena such as a lawcourt or even a street corner in front of a crowd, inevitably produces shame for the loser." Edmonds III, "Whip Scars," 167, n. 6.

dialogue, the shame caused by the awareness of one's deficiencies, represents the moment of reflexivity which may prove pivotal for a person's further attitude. Here, the painful experience of shame that the interlocutor feels as he loses the argument corresponds to the punishment of the judged soul in the afterlife. Transposed to the perspective of this life, the painful experience of *elenchos* may serve as a kind of "bitter medicine" given to those whose soul is in an inappropriate state. In this way, the *elenchos* works as a *pharmakon* that brings about the change of the "present order of things." On the individual level, this change affects the actual disposition of the soul, while on the social level, it stimulates a shift in the cultural paradigm.

It is from this point of view that Christopher Rowe speaks about a redefinition of the concept of punishment detectable in the *Gorgias*.[29] Instead of the conventional concept of penalty, including imprisonment, fines, exile or execution, there is the Socratic version of it: from the perspective of Socratic dialogical strategies, the process of punishment coincides with the laborious process of examination and instruction through speech.[30]

The method of Socratic elenchos has the same double effect as the penalties imposed on the wrongdoers according to the reformed judgment in the myth:

> It is appropriate for everyone who is subject to punishment rightly inflicted by another either to become better and profit from it, or else to be made an example for others, so that when they see him suffering whatever it is he suffers, they may be afraid and become better. Those who are benefited, who are made to pay their due by gods and men, are the ones whose errors are curable; even so, their benefit comes to them, both here and in Hades, by way of pain and suffering, for there is no other possible way to get rid of injustice. From among those who have committed the ultimate wrongs and who because of such crimes have become incurable come the ones who are made examples of. These persons themselves no longer derive any profit from their punishment, because

29 Rowe, "The Status of the Myth," 189 ff.

30 A similar assumption of coincidence between punishment and instruction through speech may be observed in the *Euthyphro.* There Socrates claims that if he gains knowledge of piety, he should be able to secure his acquittal on charges of impiety. How is it meant? G. Fay Edwards proposes a reading according to which Socrates believes that this knowledge will make him pious henceforth and that his instruction in piety is itself a suitable punishment for any past impiety. In such an innovative sense, the process of reforming a wrongdoer through successful teaching – in the form of a philosophical dialogue – constitutes due punishment. G. F. Edwards, "How to Escape Indictment for Impiety: Teaching as Punishment in the *Euthyphro*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 54,1 (2016).

> they're incurable. Others, however, do profit from it when they see them undergoing for all time the most grievous, intensely painful and frightening sufferings for their errors, simply strung up there in the prison in Hades as examples, visible warnings to unjust men who are ever arriving." (*Grg.* 525b–d)

The double effect of punishment, which means either benefiting by becoming better or by becoming an example to others,[31] is consistent with the medical metaphor distinguishing the curable and incurable cases. It applies both to the level of this world and the other world: the destiny of the curable ones manifests how one can profit in the here-and-now perspective from the philosophic examination; meanwhile, the fate of the incurable ones demonstrates the unphilosophical way of life of those who, in a Calliclean manner, avoid any outside restraint and maximise their usurpatory tendencies and desire for power. As Radcliffe Edmonds puts it, "Their inconsistent and irrational lifestyle actually inflicts continuous suffering upon them, and their souls are so deformed from the way they have lived that they can only continue, in the afterlife, the kind of life they lived when alive."[32]

It is only in light of such considerations that Socrates' enigmatic remarks – which sound so provocative to Callicles and initiate his engagement in the discussion – become intelligible:

> And, on the other hand, to reverse the case, suppose a man had to harm someone, an enemy or anybody at all, provided that he didn't suffer anything unjust from this enemy himself—for this is something to be on guard against—if the enemy did something unjust against another person, then our man should see to it in every way, both in what he does and what he says, that his enemy does not go to the judge and pay his due. And if he does go, he should scheme to get his enemy off without paying what's due [...] And if his crimes merit the death penalty, he should

31 See Plato, *Prot.* 324a–b, 325a; *Leg.* IX 854d–855a.

32 Edmonds III, "Whip Scars," 179. See Plato, *Tht.* 176e–177a: "My friend, there are two patterns set up in reality. One is divine and supremely happy; the other has nothing of God in it, and is the pattern of the deepest unhappiness. This truth the evildoer does not see; blinded by folly and utter lack of understanding, he fails to perceive that the effect of his unjust practices is to make him grow more and more like the one, and less and less like the other. For this he pays the penalty of living the life that corresponds to the pattern he is coming to resemble. And if we tell him that, unless he is delivered from this 'ability' of his, when he dies the place that is pure of all evil will not receive him; that he will forever go on living in this world a life after his own likeness—a bad man tied to bad company."

> scheme to keep him from being executed, preferably never to die at all but *to live forever in corruption*, but failing that, to have him live as long as possible in that condition." (*Grg.* 480e–481a)

The initially incomprehensible proposal to harm one's enemies by letting them go unpunished for their crimes is a hypothetical suggestion that complements the previous appeal for avoiding injustice and accusing oneself and any of one's friends who may be guilty of committing injustice:

> And if [a man] or anyone else he cares about acts unjustly, he should voluntarily go to the place where he'll pay his due as soon as possible; he should go to the judge as though he were going to a doctor, anxious that the disease of injustice shouldn't be protracted and cause his soul to fester incurably. (*Grg.* 480c–d)

In this context, the inverted image of an *immortal criminal* is a powerful one. In terms of the medical metaphor adopted in the discussion and preserved in the final myth, the image of the *deathless wrongdoer* is not a purposeless provocation. It is an intensified representation of the most definite conviction that the worst evil is to remain in a permanent state of inner psychic disorder and be deprived of any remedy.[33]

5 Conclusion

In this way, the myth amplifies and sharpens the central message of the dialogue. It makes visible the inner life of the soul and the variants of its condition manifested in certain lifestyles. In doing so, it interacts with the authoritative

33 The image of a wrongdoer, continuously experiencing his own wickedness, returns in more detail in the final myth of the *Phaedo.* An impressive image of an incurable criminal cast into the bottomless abyss of Tartarus shows the permanent suffering of a paradigmatic wrongdoer imprisoned in an extremely turbulent environment, full of wild storms of water and wind oscillating up and down without any fixed point. Playing with the perspective of life and death, the image of a deathless wrongdoer translates itself into the image of a soul permanently experiencing the violent pulsation of Tartarus, corresponding to the disturbed and corrupted nature of the soul itself. Consider also the verbal correspondence of ἄνω καὶ κάτω μεταβαλλομένου ("shifting back and forth", *Grg.* 481e) describing Callicles' adaptability to the mood of the crowd, or μεταπίπτειν ἄνω κάτω ("shift back and forth", *Grg.* 493a) describing unstable appetites prone to easy manipulation in the *Gorgias* and κυμαίνει ἄνω καὶ κάτω ("oscillates up and down in waves", *Phd.* 112b) describing the restless pulsation of Tartarus in the *Phaedo.*

voice of an older poetic tradition, while critically responding to current social, intellectual and political tendencies in contemporary Athens. Such a strategy creates a complex web of meaning. Far from being a mere fancy, the myth incorporated into the structure of the dialogue helps to reshape mental schemes and offers an alternative mode of promoting good, both on the individual and political level.

By examining these perspectives, the dialogue implicitly answers Callicles' question: "Tell me, Socrates, are we to take you as being in earnest now, or joking? For if you *are* in earnest, and these things you're saying are really true, won't this human life of ours be turned upside down, and won't everything we do evidently be the opposite of what we should do?" (*Grg.* 481b–c). In response, Plato designs the dialogue to show the risks of an ambitious lifestyle threatening both the individual soul and the political community. On a personal level, he portrays the character of Callicles as a proponent of unrestrained hedonism and an untamed desire for power and domination. On the political level, he points to similar tendencies expressed in Athenian aggressive foreign policy. The dark side of Callicles' glorification of the life of a mob orator is the subjection to the ever-changing moods of the crowd. The rhetorician simply vocalizes the desires of the majority. In this regard, he has no choice but to satisfy the appetites of the crowd just as a cook satisfies the tastes of banquet guests.

At this point, several indications continuously present in the dialogue begin to converge. The ever-present desire for dominance has its historical manifestation in the Athenian military expedition against Sicily, fuelled by the escalated appetites of the crowd fostered by political rhetoric. The "Sicilian motif" combines the topic of pleasing rhetoric (embodied in the figure of Gorgias, the Sicilian rhetorician)[34] and military disaster of Athens during the Sicilian expedition. Repeated allusions to warfare go back to the very first words of the dialogue whose opening phrase "war and a battle" (πολέμου καὶ μάχης) shapes the background of the whole discussion.[35]

Perils of a lifestyle ruled by the ideology of expansion and domination at the expense of others – hidden already in Callicles' opening phrase – are gradually revealed in the next debate. In sharp contrast to the ideal of ambitious life stands the wretchedness of unchecked a life of tyrannical ambitions promoted

34 A minor hint even playfully introduces the motif of Sicilian cookery (*Grg.* 518b), which fits nicely into the parallel between cookery and rhetoric.

35 In a short remark on the *Gorgias*, Myles Burnyeat stresses a verbal hint to the principal subject of the debate which is "Callicles' view of life as itself a battle, a war for advantage" (Burnyeat, "First Words," 11). The reading proposed in this chapter extends the cue to cover not only the level of personal lifestyle but also the political dimension of the issue.

by clever rhetorical skills. In the most graphic form, this is demonstrated in the concluding myth. Through this subtle web of meaning permeating the whole text, the message of the dialogue links its beginning to its end. In this way, the final myth functions as an integral part of the dialogue, fitting well into the structure of its dialogical argumentation.

If the proposed interpretation is plausible, we can conclude that Plato's use of mythical narration in the Gorgias proves to be an effective way to carry out philosophical communication not only through intellectual reasoning but also through mythical imagination.[36]

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36 This contribution was written as a part of the project *Philosophy and Politics in the Public Space* financed by the institutional research of the Jan Evangelista Purkyně University (UJEP-IGA-TC-2019–63–02–2).

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CHAPTER 11

Socrates and the Weakness of the Strong Man: Plato's Polemic against Populisms in the *Gorgias*

Michael Erler

Abstract

In the paper I argue that Socrates develops a new understanding of what he calls "true rhetoric and true politics" which must be based on mimesis, but also on norms and should focus on the benefits for the addressees and audiences, not for the speaker or politicians themselves. This new approach to rhetoric and politics helps to understand better why Socrates claims that philosophers have the power to care for themselves as well as for others. I suggest reading the *Apology* in the light of the Socrates' new approach to rhetoric. I also argue that Socrates reacts to developments in the political and cultural life of his time: growing populism and what has been called the "theatrical mentality" of the Athenians. I therefore suggest reading Gorgias as a kind of anti–populist manifesto.

Keywords

populism – addressee – audience – argument – intellectual – Mimesis – Norms – Philosopher – Politics – populism – Rhetoric (true) – theatricality

1 The *Gorgias* and Plato's Anti-Populism

The *Gorgias* is one of Plato's most extensive and richest dialogues. Its ancient subtitle – "On Rhetoric"[1] – suggests that rhetoric is its main topic. But it becomes evident that questions like what the correct use of rhetoric is and what constitutes good politics might be answered only if the question of what it means to live a life properly is answered. The ancient commentator Olympiodoros

1 Diogenes Laertius III 59. Michael Erler, *Platon* (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2007), 132–141. François Renaud, *La justice du dialogue et ses limites. Étude du Gorgias de Platon* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2022), 7–27.

was right. The actual focus of the discussions in the *Gorgias* is ethical: the main topic of the *Gorgias* is the question how I should live.[2]

Two concepts of life are up for discussion: that of the traditional politician and orator, who is focusing on increasing his or her own power and influence, and the life of the philosopher or – to put it in modern terms – the life of the intellectual, who in the late fifth century B.C. was regarded as antisocial, a-political and too weak to defend him or herself against injustice, and therefore becomes the subject of mockery, for instance in comedy.[3]

Plato's *Gorgias* reacts to such attacks by showing that traditional politicians or even the tyrant are in reality not strong, but weak, because they do not have the knowledge which is necessary to distinguish between good and bad. They therefore fail to achieve what really is good for them. So, they do not get what they really want. According to Plato's Socrates, the traditional politicians and orators – and not the philosophers or intellectuals – are unable to care for themselves.

This is a famous and much discussed argument in the *Gorgias*.[4] In my paper, however, I would rather like to concentrate on yet another argument, which is proposed by Socrates in a later part of the dialogue. Here Socrates discusses Callicles' understanding of the relationship between politicians or orators and their audiences (*Grg*. 508c–522e). According to Callicles, this relationship is characterized by *mimesis*. For according to him orators as well as politicians are obliged to assimilate or adapt to their audiences or addressees in order to influence them successfully. Socrates, however, argues that this approach leads to populism and self-contradiction, and therefore causes weakness of the politician or the rhetorician.

Socrates suggests a new understanding of what he calls "true rhetoric and true politics,"[5] which according to him must be based on *mimesis*,[6] but also on norms and should focus on the benefits for the addressees and audiences, not

2 Olympiodorus, *In Plat. Gorg.* 3,1–14 Westerink. See Damian Caluori, "Olympiodoros," in *Philosophie der Kaiserzeit und der Spätantike* (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2018), 2051–2059, esp. 2055.

3 See Bernhard Zimmermann, "Aristophanes und die Intellektuellen," in *Aristophane. Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique* 38, eds. J. M. Bremer and E. W. Handley (Genève: Fondation Hardt, 1993).

4 See Christopher Rowe, *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

5 See Michael Erler, *Sokrates in der Höhle, Aspekte praktischer Ethik im Platonismus der Kaiserzeit* (Tübingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020), 16–22. Renaud, *La justice*, 167–188.

6 See Malcolm Schofield, "Callicles' Return: *Gorgias* 509–522 Reconsidered," *Philosophie Antique* 17 (2017). Renaud, *La justice*, 142–148.

for the speaker or politicians themselves. This new approach to rhetoric and politics, of course, requires a re-orientation and transformation of traditional political and rhetorical concepts and instruments. But it also helps to better understand why Socrates claims that philosophers, as true politicians or rhetoricians, have the power to care for themselves as well as for others.

Socrates' approach might seem paradoxical to us as it did to Plato's contemporaries. But – as I shall argue – Socrates' argument from assimilation, as Malcolm Schofield once labelled it,[7] reacts to developments in the political and cultural life of his time: growing populism and what has been called the "theatrical mentality" of the Athenians, who were more interested in the performances of the politicians in the assembly rather than in what they were saying. This "theatrical mentality"[8] and the populism of politicians which responded to this development might seem familiar to us today in many parts of the western world. Thus, I recommend reading the last part of *Gorgias* as a kind of anti-populist manifesto, whose analysis and arguments might be of interest even today.

2 Strong Politics – Weak Intellectuals

So, let us first remind ourselves of the context of this anti-populist argument. The *Gorgias* is made up of three conversations Socrates has with Gorgias, Polos and Callicles.[9] The conversation with Gorgias concerns the definition of rhetoric. Gorgias – like most of his contemporaries – regards rhetoric as a practical art of influencing men's wills through the spoken word, an important road to power and the guarantee of personal security.

The conversation with Polos brings up the moral aspect of how to handle rhetoric and the question of power, which is exercised by the rhetoricians. Power – it turns out – is not secured just by calculation of means, but also by the discovery of the good ends. Since real advantage for us is the just

7 Schofield, "Callicles' Return," 22–25.

8 See Jerome J. Politt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 4; Josiah Ober and Barry Strauss, "Drama, Political Rhetoric, and the Discourse of Athenian Democracy," in *Nothing to Do with Dionysos? Athenian Drama in its Social Context*, ed. J. J. Winkler and F. I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 237–70; Angelikos Chaniotis, "Theatrically Beyond the Theater. Staging Public life in the Hellenistic World," in *De La Scène aux Gradins. Théâtre et représentations dramatique aprés Alexandre le Grand dans les cites hellénistiques*, ed. B. Le Guen (Toulouse: Pallas, 1997), 224–232.

9 See Erler, *Platon*, 132–141.

life, an authentic power should seek justice. In the conversation with Callicles the questions of happiness and the nature of rhetoric are addressed. Here the choice between natural and conventional goods, but most importantly the choice between the practical life of the common Athenian people and the theoretical life of intellectuals like Socrates, play a major role.[10] Callicles claims that intellectuals like Socrates are weak, because they have no experience of real life (484d) and therefore are unable to defend themselves against injustice – for instance in court. If Socrates were to suffer injustice, Socrates like any intellectual would not know what to say, let alone could be able to protect himself against greatest danger. According to Callicles this is a disgrace and therefore Socrates and the intellectuals are social outsiders (486b). Socrates, or so Callicles recommends, should rather practice the art of deeds. Philosophy also might be practiced but only at a young age, before one learns what really counts in life (485a–486d).

The discussion in the *Gorgias* therefore comes down to two options: Either to live a self-interested, powerful life as a traditional politician does or the life of an unworldly and weak intellectual:

> For you see that our debate is upon a question which has the highest conceivable claims to the serious interest even of a person who has but little intelligence – namely, what course of life is best; whether it should be that to which you invite me, with all those manly pursuits of speaking in Assembly and practicing rhetoric and going in for politics after the fashion of you modern politicians, or this life of philosophy; and what makes the difference between these two. (500b–c, trans. Lamb)

Callicles obviously regards this to be an excluding alternative. He is convinced that only traditional self-interested politics or rhetoric enable people to achieve power, to defend themselves against injustice and harm and to provide happiness. Now, it should be noted that Callicles' reticence toward intellectuals was quite popular in Athens at the end of the fifth century as we learn from public speeches, from the historians and most of all from drama and comedy. Aristophanes, for instance presents, intellectuals on stage as people who are always making up arguments for absurd problems, who do not know what real life is about, who are not familiar with politics and its institutions, and who

10 See *Grg.* 484c–486d, 500c–d, 521d–522c. See also Igor Jordovic, "Bios Praktikos and Bios Theoretikos in Plato's Gorgias," in *Socrates and the Socratic Dialogue*, ed. A. Stavrou and Ch. Moore (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 373–377. Joachim Dalfen, *Gorgias.* Übersetzung und Kommentar (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 336–342.

withdraw from public life and are helpless if they are harmed. In short, intellectuals and philosophers are described as useless members of society and as outsiders. They do not fit into the picture of the ideal society that draws Pericles in the *Historiae* of Thucydides and which mirrors the self-image of the Athenians at that time: to be busybodies, to be always curious and self-interested, always striving for power and trying to influence others to do what is advantageous for them.[11] Intellectuals and philosophers are regarded and presented on stage as abnormal people who for that reason became the object of ridicule. For example, note the proto-intellectual Socrates in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, whose strange behaviour obviously appeals to the resentment of the audience against intellectuals.[12]

Callicles' claim that philosophers are social outsiders and too weak to care for themselves, as well as Socrates' opposition to that understanding, are to be understood and interpreted against this background.

But there is even more to it if we remind ourselves that the dialogue *Gorgias* itself was written well after 399 BC, the very year when the philosopher Socrates was accused, convicted and put to death.[13] The reader of the *Gorgias* will understand Callicles' claim that philosophers like Socrates are not strong enough to defend themselves against injustice as a kind of *vaticinium ex eventu*: Because he knew that Socrates indeed suffered injustice and that he apparently was unable to defend himself in court. So, he might regard Plato's *Apology* as a testimony to Socrates' weakness and as a proof that Callicles was right. He even might wonder, whether it was a good idea by Plato to choose Socrates to defend the thesis that only the philosophers are strong and able to defend themselves. Seen against this background it becomes clear that in the *Gorgias* Socrates not only fights against Callicles' thesis and a popular prejudice and resentment against intellectuals, but also defends himself and his way of life as a philosopher. If he prevailed in this fight it would prove that he not only had better arguments on his side, but it also would illustrate that he as an intellectual or philosopher in fact was not weak, but able to defend himself when facing injustice. In addition to this, Socrates' arguments in the *Gorgias* would gain hermeneutical power. For they would help to better understand why Plato's *Apology* by no means testifies to Socrates' failure to defend himself

11 See Thucydides II 34–46. See also Christine Abbt and Nahyan Niazi, eds., *Der Vieltuer und die Demokratie. Politische und philosophische Aspekte von Allotrio- und Polypragmosyne* (Basel: Colmena, 2017).

12 See Aristophanes, *Nubes* 228, 333, 360, 1284; see Kenneth Dover, *Aristophanes*: *Clouds* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), XXXIV.

13 Plat., *Ap*. 19b–c, 26d–e. See Ernst Heitsch, *Apologie des Sokrates. Übersetzung und Kommentar*, 2. Auflage (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 63–66.

and to his weakness as a philosopher, but to his strength and ability to take care of himself when accused by others. In what follows I shall argue that Socrates' anti-populist argument in the *Gorgias* indeed is of hermeneutical value for a better understanding of the *Apology* as well.

3 Socrates' Reaction

But let us see first how Socrates defends the life of the philosopher and refutes the populist assertion of Callicles that intellectuals are useless for society. Socrates starts by claiming – and Callicles agrees – that traditional rhetoric and politics aim at pleasing their audiences in order to achieve power and security (501d–503c).[14] To prove this, Socrates interestingly refers to music and to drama, and especially to tragedy. He asserts that dramatists do not fight by arguments in their plays nor do they aim at making the audience better, but rather wish to win them over by pleasing them. They do so because theatre performances are competitions, which tragic poets want to win. They therefore have to persuade the judge, i.e. the audience, to vote for them and therefore they try to please the audience. Now, or so Socrates argues, the same is true with respect to rhetoric. If one takes away rhythm, melody and verse in drama, Socrates argues, only the words remain and that is why a tragedy can be regarded as a form of traditional rhetoric, which also tries to win over the audience by pleasing it (502e). All this is done out of self-interest and not for the betterment of the audience.

In fact – or so Socrates claims – no politician ever existed in Athens who really cared for the people of Athens and not for himself only (503b–c).

Now, modern commentators have wondered why Socrates refers to drama in this context.[15] They call this passage a digression. I would like to remind us, though, that in Socrates' and Plato's time rhetoric had acquired an important influence in politics and in the cultural life in Athens outside the assembly or the court. One notices a growing influence of rhetorical elements in tragedies, for instance of Euripides. The importance of the theatre plays in society on the other hand increased the expectation of the people of Athens to experience elements of performances and spectacles outside the theatre, for example in

14 See Jessica Moss, "The Doctor and the Pastry Chef: Pleasure and Persuasion in Plato's Gorgias," *Ancient Philosophy* 27,2 (2007): 229–49.

15 E. R. Dodds, *Plato*: *Gorgias*. *A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 320f. Plato often explains important aspects in digressions, see Erler, "Episode und Exkurs in Drama und Dialog. Anmerkung zu einer poetologischen Diskussion bei Platon und Aristoteles," in *Orchestra. Festschrift für H. Flashar,* ed. A. Bierl and P. von Möllendorff (Stuttgart–Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1994).

the assembly or in the court. We indeed observe a growing diffusion of dramatic elements and similes in politics of that time, which has been described as theatrical. One already has observed that at that time social life was characterized and dominated by a "theatrical mentality".[16] Life and especially public life more and more were regarded as a spectacle. This development did not escape Thucydides' notice. He tells us that the politician Cleon once deplored that the assembly of Athens would be vulnerable to speeches of clever but corrupt speakers; that the assembly was addicted to treating rhetoric as a contest; and that this addiction turned the Athenians into "spectators of speeches and hearers of action,"[17] because they were less interested in the content of what was being said than in the performance of the speaker and the entertainment they offered. Politics was almost transformed into a theatre play, which also aims only at amusing the spectators.

It therefore makes sense that Socrates refers to drama in order to illustrate and to prove, that rhetoric always is trying to adapt and to imitate the audience in order to please it and to win the contest. For, Socrates is convinced that traditional politicians try to make people happy or feel good by using words that correspond to the way they already are.[18] Again, Socrates' arguments get profile, when seen in the cultural context of the late 5th century in Athens.

Socrates criticises Callicles' thesis by applying what Malcolm Schofield[19] has called the assimilation thesis. Let us remind ourselves that according to Callicles an orator or politician should adapt to or imitate – or even identify with – the audiences in the assembly or in the theatre to win the vote or the competition (510c–511c). Socrates compares this relationship between orator or politician and addressee or people with the relationship of a lover with the beloved and reminds us that Callicles and he himself both have a pair of loves. The beloved of Callicles is the Athenian people or demos; the beloved of Socrates is lady *philosophia* (481d).

Callicles therefore has to adapt to the *demos* in order to please his love and to gain power over it. But this – or so Socrates argues – will create problems for Callicles, because his beloved *demos* is always changing its mind and

16 For this topic, see Jordan J. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 4; Chaniotis, "Theatrically Beyond the Theater," 221–259, esp. 248.

17 Thucydides III 38; Stephen Halliwell, "Between Public and Private: Tragedy and Athenian Experience of Rhetoric," in *Greek Tragedy and the Historian*, ed. Ch. Pelling (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 121–2.

18 See *Grg.* 513c.

19 Schofield, "Callicles' return," 22–25. Rachana Kamtekar, "The profession of friendship: Callicles democratic politics and rhetorical education in Plato's Gorgias," *Ancient Philosophy* 25 (2005).

fluctuating in its behaviour. If Callicles as the lover of the *demos* wishes to imitate the Demos, he himself will have to change his mind any time the beloved *demos* does so and therefore never will find a firm stand or position (481e).

This changing of positions and beliefs causes, of course, disharmony within the 'lover' Callicles – or as Socrates puts it: There will be a Callicles in Callicles, who contradicts himself (482b)[20] – and discord will exist in his life. And this disharmony creates weakness in every lover of the people like politicians and orators. Populist politicians who claim to be the mouthpiece of the people do not really achieve power – although they might believe otherwise – but are weak because their power is only borrowed and dependent on the favour of the *demos* and the *demos* changes its mind every moment. The lover therefore never can be sure to what position he should adapt. The lover–politician is rather enslaved by the *demos*. The imitation of the unsteady *demos* causes a breakdown of communication between the lover and the beloved,[21] because the fluctuation of the positions of the *demos* induces arbitrariness of the statements. Populist politicians might believe themselves to be 'masters of truth', who command what is true and what not, and think they are powerful.

In reality, however, their wish to adapt to people who change their mind every other moment leads them to say that things are so and then to say that those same things are not so, which prevents a communication that strives for truth. It is not by chance that Callicles falls into silence right after this exchange of arguments with Socrates (505c–509a). By this Plato shows that populist politicians like Callicles may feel like masters of truth, but in reality they are the slaves of the people and their volatile opinions. The imitation-argument therefore proves that Callicles is wrong: Imitation of the demos does not create power and security, as Callicles believes, but is responsible for the weakness of politicians and orators.

4 Strong Philosophers as 'True Politicians'

The assimilation-argument not only proves that Callicles is wrong, but also – as Socrates now hastens to show – that Socrates is right in claiming that the philosopher is not weak but strong.

20 See Michael Erler, "Socrates in the Cave. Argumentations as Therapy for Passions in Gorgias and Phaedo," in *Plato Ethicus. Philosophy is Life*, ed. M. Migliori (St. Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2004).

21 See Theo Kobusch, "Nachwort," in Plato: *Gorgias* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2014), 241.

For Socrates confesses to be a lover as well. His love, however, is not the *demos* but lady *philosophia* (513b). In contrast to the people this lady is stable, does not run away and does not change her mind every moment. *Philosophia* rather stands for unchangeable principles and sentences like the one that it is better to suffer injustice than to do it. Socrates' mistress Philosophy is always telling him the same truth, because she does not proceed casuistically asking whether this or that action is right, just or fitting, but she is looking for the stable essences of things and therefore knows what is just, right and fitting.[22]

If Callicles' imitation-argument – namely that the lover always has to imitate the beloved – applies here as well, as Socrates rightly claims, it follows that, as a lover and imitator of stable and unchangeable *philosophia*, Socrates himself and his opinions become stable and unchangeable as well – as he in fact demonstrates in the *Gorgias* and in other dialogues time and again (509a). The imitation of his beloved – lady *philosophia* – therefore prevents him from ever changing his mind, contradicting himself and therefore from weakness.

And yet another important difference follows. For sure, lady *philosophia* is the beloved of Socrates whom he imitates; but she is not the addressee of his speeches or the partner of his conversations as *demos* is for Callicles – and every traditional orator. Lady *philosophia* rather represents norms or rules that are separated from both the philosopher and his partners.

That is to say: The traditional bipolar relationship between orator or politician and addressee or audience is replaced by a triangular relationship: Orator-addressee-norm.[23] This is an important innovation, because this triangular relationship enables Socrates to remain stable in his own opinions even while he addresses people who often are changing their minds. The triangular relationship (speaker – norm – addressee) enables Socrates to remain independent of any influence by the addressee. For he does not imitate the addressee, as it might seem to some interpreters, but *philosophia*. One therefore might say that the traditional adaption to the people, which is practised by traditional politicians and which creates all the problems Socrates is reminding us of, is replaced and turned into an imitation of stable principles or to an adjustment to a fixed norm.[24]

22 See Plat. *Tht.* 172c–177c; see also Emanuel Maffi, "The Theatetus Digression. An Ethical Interlude in an Epistemological Dialogue?" in *Thinking, Knowing, Acting. Epistemology and Ethics in Plato and Ancient Platonism*, ed. M. Bonazzi et al. (Leiden: Brill 2019).

23 As it is discussed in the *Phdr.* 269d–274b.

24 See Michael Erler, "Epicurus as deus mortalis. Homoiosis theoi and Epicurean self," in *Traditions of Theology. Studies in Hellenistic Theology, its Background and Aftermath* [Philosophia Antiqua 89], eds. D. Frede and A. Laks (Leiden: Brill, 2002). For Aristotle see also David Sedley, "Becoming like God in the Timaeus and Aristotle," in *Interpreting*

This new triangular constellation allows Socrates to address people without being obliged to please them but to treat them like a good doctor who, knowing what is truly good for the patient, sometimes gives bitter medicine because it helps and heals. This therapeutic approach to rhetoric and politics does not wish to always please the people – it even sometimes might find it necessary to irritate them; but it always strives for helping the addressee to become a better person.

That is to say: Socrates develops the concept of a new kind of "strong rhetoric", politics and philosophy which aim at supporting the partners, addressees or audiences to recognize what really is good for them.[25]

For that reason true rhetoric has to serve as a care for the soul, which sometimes even uses anti-persuasive and irritating arguments as a medical treatment, because this will have a beneficial effect on the addressee in that it creates order within the souls of the citizens and generates justice and happiness in society. Socrates of course knows that this understanding of rhetoric or politics is new and will be regarded as odd by Callicles and by many contemporaries. As Socrates confesses in the *Gorgias*:

> I think I am one of few, not to say the only one, in Athens who attempts the true art of statesmanship, and the only man of the present time who manages affairs of state. (521d, trans. H. N. Fowler)

True politics, as Socrates understands it, means to care for the souls of his fellow citizens in order to enable them to recognise what is wrong and what is not, and to help them to deal with other people and the institutions in a correct manner – an approach which might be called *philosophia medicans* since it tries to free people from misconceptions by refuting them. Socrates, then, is presented by Plato as the model of the true politician in the *Gorgias* and in other dialogues, a politician who acts out of love for lady *philosophia* and the rules and norms which she represents and which help him to also love the people and deal with them properly. His love for *philosophia* inspires and forces him to urge his partners to reconsider their positions and to perhaps modify them. When he irritates his partners and causes helplessness he is just trying to help them to become better and happier citizens. By doing this Socrates proves

the Timaeus–Critias, eds. T. Calvo and L. Brisson (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1997), 327–339.

25 See Michael Erler, "Platon und seine Rhetorik," in *Handbuch Antike Rhetorik*, eds. M. Erler and C. Tornau (Berlin–Boston: De Gruyter, 2019).

and illustrates that the philosopher indeed is not weak but strong contrary to what Callicles and the public of his time seem to believe.

5 Socrates in the *Apology*

But what to say about the *Apology*? The *Apology* is perhaps Plato's most famous text, but it also has irritated the commentators of all times – at first sight the *Apology* testifies to the weakness of the philosopher Socrates rather than to his power and strength.[26] It seems to confirm Callicles' claim that philosophers are weak, because they are unable to defend themselves when suffering injustice and harm. Certainly, a closer look and analysis of what is really going on in the *Apology* might point to another direction and interpretation.

Although quite obviously written by Plato to set a monument of the steadfastness of Socrates and to defend him against the accusation of godlessness and the seduction of youth, the performance of Socrates as described by Plato has upset his contemporaries and many readers.[27] Socrates' behaviour has often been regarded as unusual under the circumstances and even arrogant. Indeed, Socrates' defence speech seems more like a prosecution of his accusers than a defence of himself. Instead of defending himself Socrates rather seems to refute his judges. One might think of the elenctic questioning of the judges Socrates practices in court[28] or of Socrates' reference to his successors who will continue to ask agonizing questions. Socrates' claim that his philosophical Pragma should be acclaimed as a service to the gods and he himself as a gift of God[29] has been perceived as a provocation by the judges and many readers. The same is true when Socrates denies the relevance of the death penalty and when he demands to be honoured by being offered free meals in the Prytaneion (36d, 37a).

Socrates' behaviour before the court as it is described by Plato must have seemed embarrassing to the judges and the reader of Plato's *Apology* at his

26 For rhetoric in the *Apology* see Heitsch, *Apologie des Sokrates*, 41–44.

27 See Myles Burnyeat, "The Impiety of Socrates," in *Plato's Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Critical essays*, ed. Rachana Kamtekar (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 150–62.

28 Cf. Joachim Dalfen, Platon: *Gorgias.* Übersetzung und Kommentar (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 277 f.

29 *Ap*. 23c. See Michael Erler, "Hilfe der Götter und Erkenntnis des Selbst. Sokrates als Göttergeschenk bei Platon und den Platonikern," in *Metaphysik und Religion. Zur Signatur des Spätantiken Denkens*, eds. T. Kobusch and M. Erler (Berlin–Boston: B.G. Teubner, 2002), 402.

time. The condemnation of Socrates seemed to be a natural consequence of his rhetorical incompetence.[30]

But all this is true only if seen from the perspective of traditional rhetoric and politics. Seen from the perspective of Socrates' true politics and true rhetoric, however, it becomes clear that Socrates' behaviour is directed by Socrates' beloved *philosophia* and her rules and principles, according to which rhetoric should be practised not to please the audiences or partners like in the theatre, but to heal the addressees like a doctor who sometimes uses bitter medicine (*Grg*. 477e–479e). That is why Socrates puts the judges to a test. He does so for their betterment and to his disadvantage. And he even confirms this when he says:

> I am therefore, you men of Athens, now far from defending me for my sake, as many may believe, but I defend myself in your interest, so that you may not perish from the gift which God has given you by my condemnation (*Ap.* 30b, trans. Lamb)

It is interesting that Socrates uses almost the same words in the *Gorgias*, when in the conversation with Callicles he anticipates what he would say when he would be accused and had to defend himself in court, saying:

> And so, men of Athens I am now making my defense not for my own sake, as one might imagine, but far more for yours, that you may not by condemning me err in your treatment of the gift the God gave you. (*Grg.* 522c, trans. Fowler)

Seen against this background, Socrates' behaviour in the *Apology* becomes a prime example for Platonic therapeutic rhetoric and politics, which includes purifying the souls of the judges from ignorance. Socrates' behaviour in the *Apology* illustrates and confirms what he is arguing for in the *Gorgias*. Socrates argues in the *Gorgias* and illustrates in the *Apology* what is meant by being in love with lady *philosophia*: He sticks to his convictions and tries to help others to get rid of misconceptions. That is why Socrates does not behave like a defendant, but rather accuses the judges before court. This is why he practices a new kind of rhetoric in philosophical conversation, this is why he irritates his partners and does not even try to please them – and he does so – or it seems – to his own disadvantage. But his disadvantage only concerns his bodily

30 See Heitsch, *Apologie des Sokrates*, 41–44.

existence. Yet as Socrates makes clear in the *Gorgias*: it is not the bodily existence which counts for the philosopher. The philosopher rather is looking for the well-being of the soul – his own soul and of the souls of his partners or his fellow citizens (512e).

The *Apology* therefore illustrates the anti-populist stance which Socrates defended in the *Gorgias*, i.e. that it is not important to just survive at any cost when in danger, but to live a good life and to save one's own soul and the souls of others.

6 Aristotle and 'True Politics'

Socrates as the true politician and orator who cares for the souls of his fellow citizens: this concept might seem bizarre to modern interpreters. However, one should not forget that to the ancients the word *polis* does not necessarily entail the aspect of territory or institution like the modern concept of state. *Polis* rather means community of people as individuals.[31] This is why Socrates calls his philosophical pragma – his caring for the souls of his fellow citizens – true politics.[32] This is why Socrates in Plato's *Republic* has much to say about the human soul but much less so about laws and political institutions.

One also should keep in mind that Plato developed his concept of true politics and rhetoric in reaction to a growing populist movement and the theatrical mentality at his time which he refused to imitate or to adapt to. This is why Plato's Socrates proposes to replace the traditional binary relation of speaker and addressee by his triangular model of speaker or politician, norm and addressee. When stable norms and rules are to be imitated, traditional rhetoric is transformed into a sort of pedagogical tool, which aims at improving the souls of the addressee. Plato's Socratic true politics as developed in the *Gorgias* and illustrated in the *Apology* and other dialogues indeed established a kind of educational tradition,[33] whose traces can be observed for instance in Aristotle and can be followed until late antiquity. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*,[34] for example, Aristotle argues that two types of politics exist: traditional politics

31 See Thucydides VII 77,7; see Norbert Blössner, *Dialogform und Argument, Studien zu Platons* Politeia (Stuttgart: Steiner–Franz Verlag, 1997), 189.

32 *Grg*. 521d6–522a7. See Erler, *Sokrates in der Höhle*, 16–21.

33 See Michael Erler, "Vom admirativen zum irritierten Staunen. Philosophie, Rhetorik und Verunsicherung in Platons Dialogen," in *Irritationen. Rhetorische und poetische Verfahren der Verunsicherung*, eds. R. Früh et al. (Berlin – New York: De Gruyter), 2015.

34 Arist., *Eth. Nic*. I 1095b22 ff.

motivated by personal ambition, and a second kind of politics, that Aristotle calls "true politics", which wishes to make his fellow citizens "good or better" in their souls.

> The true statesman seems to be one, who has made a special study of the nature of goodness, since his aim is to make citizens good and law-abiding men. (*Eth. Nic.* I 1102a7–10, trans. Rackham)

It seems plausible to argue that Aristotle's differentiation between traditional and true politics, which intends to educate and improve the souls of the citizen, refers to what Socrates has to say about "true politicians and true politics" in the *Gorgias*.[35] When Socrates surmises in the *Gorgias* that the educational purpose of true politics can only be put into practice in a small circle of students, this as well might have inspired Aristotle, who says similar things in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.[36]

7 Conclusion

In this paper I wanted to remind readers that Plato creates a concept of "true politics" as an activity which tries to obey unchangeable principles in an effort to serve fellow citizens and his partners in conversation. I tried to bring attention to the fact that Plato's philosophy indeed is political – which often has been denied – but it is political in a new and transformed sense of the word, which does not aim at one's own advantage but wishes to help others to become better humans or citizens. I also wanted to remind us of the fact that Plato is developing his idea not the least in reaction to self-orientated populism, which was growing at his time, and opposing a theatrical mentality as it were which declares self-interest as the natural basis of politics and superficial performance as a means to impress people and thereby to achieve power. I suggest that this might not seem very unfamiliar to us today and for this reason the last part of the dialogue still should be heard as Plato's anti-populist voice.

35 See Eckart Schütrumpf, Aristoteles: *Politik*. Buch I (Berlin – Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991), 78–9.

36 See Plat., *Grg.* 521d6 ff., Arist., *Eth. Nic.* I 1102a8–1103a10. See also Schütrumpf, Aristoteles: *Politik*. Buch I, 82.

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Index Locorum

In the *Gorgias* Plato offers a synthesis of what he thinks about the bitter conflict between philosophical and non-philosophical approaches to one's responsibilities in private and public life. This book contributes to a deeper understanding of this historically and conceptually rich canvas by shedding light on its main topics: speech in its philosophical and non-philosophical forms, psychology in relation to virtuous life, and politics which charges the two former topics with high stakes that call for personal choices.

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ISBN: 978-90-04-69905-2

9 789004 699052

Brill's Plato Studies Series, 17

ISSN 2452-2945

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